

Making sense of Absorption Capacity within the EU: a study of the concept

History, clarification, assessment

Ida Hjelvesæth



Master thesis

Department of Political Science

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

April 2007

Acknowledgements

The process of writing this thesis has been both a challenging and rewarding experience. My interest in the subject was sparked during my time at the Department of Government and International Affairs at the University of Durham (England).

I wish to thank the following for their help; firstly, my tutor Ulf Sverdrup for his advice and assistance (V06, H06, V07). My second debt of gratitude is owed to my father, Jøran Hjelmesæth, for providing intellectual and moral support, offering valuable help. I also wish to thank Matthew McGee for proof reading and useful comments on drafts. It would be amiss of me not to mention my fellow students and friends Yngvild Herje Arnesen and Yngvild Prydz for making my days at university a memorable experience, as well as academically rewarding. My final note of thanks goes to my family for their unconditional support throughout.

Finally, I recognise that any mistakes made in the course of this thesis are of my own making.

Word count: **34 733**

Oslo, 20th April 2007

Ida Hjelmesæth

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
CONTENTS	5
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM OF THE THESIS	9
1.2 ABSORPTION CAPACITY – INTRODUCING THE TERM.....	12
1.3 CONTEXT: ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE IN THE EU – THE REVIVAL OF ABSORPTION CAPACITY ..	14
1.4 OPERATIONALISATIONS OF TERMS	18
1.5 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	19
1.5.1 <i>Absorption capacity as a qualitative case study</i>	19
1.5.2 <i>Empirical Sources</i>	21
1.5.3 <i>Reliability and Validity</i>	22
2. LESSONS FROM THE PAST: ENLARGING THE UNION IN THE ABSENCE OF CONCERNS RELATING TO ABSORPTION CAPACITY	24
2.1 FIRST ENLARGEMENT OF 1973: DENMARK, IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM	27
2.2 SECOND AND THIRD ENLARGEMENTS OF 1981 AND 1986: GREECE, SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL..	29
2.3 FOURTH ENLARGEMENT OF 1995: AUSTRIA, FINLAND, AND SWEDEN.....	33
2.4 THE ABSENCE OF CONCERNS RELATING TO ABSORPTION CAPACITY	36
3. CONTEMPORARY ENLARGEMENTS AND THE EMERGENCE OF ABSORPTION CAPACITY AS A CONCEPT.....	37
3.1 FIFTH ENLARGEMENT 2004: CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN EXPANSION	39
3.2 MOST RECENT ENLARGEMENTS OF 2007: BULGARIA AND ROMANIA	44
3.3 FURTHER POSSIBLE EXPANSION: THE CASE OF TURKEY	47
3.4 THE EMERGENCE OF THE ABSORPTION CAPACITY PROBLEM	50

4.	HANDLING THE PROBLEM OF ABSORPTION CAPACITY – CLARIFICATION AND DEFINITION	56
4.1	THE COMMISSION’S ENLARGEMENT STRATEGY AND MAIN CHALLENGES 2006 – 2007 REPORT	57
4.1.1	<i>The Commission’s proposed measures</i>	<i>59</i>
4.1.2	<i>The Commission’s Conclusions</i>	<i>62</i>
4.2	THE PARLIAMENT’S RESOLUTION ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE EU’S CAPACITY TO INTEGRATE NEW MEMBER STATES	64
4.2.1	<i>The Parliament’s proposed measures</i>	<i>66</i>
4.2.2	<i>Conclusions of the resolution</i>	<i>68</i>
4.3	ABSORPTION CAPACITY AND THE MEDIA	69
4.3.1	<i>How absorption capacity is defined and understood</i>	<i>70</i>
4.3.2	<i>Absorption capacity; a problem or a pseudo-problem?</i>	<i>71</i>
4.4	INSIDE THE CORE OF ABSORPTION CAPACITY: LEGITIMACY AND EFFECTIVENESS	75
4.4.1	<i>Legitimacy</i>	<i>76</i>
4.4.2	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>81</i>
4.4.3	<i>Conclusion: legitimacy and effectiveness</i>	<i>83</i>
5.	EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF ABSORPTION CAPACITY IN THE EU	85
5.1	LEGITIMACY – EUROBAROMETER SURVEYS	88
5.1.1	<i>Political, social, and economic concerns</i>	<i>90</i>
5.1.2	<i>Legitimacy in the EU</i>	<i>94</i>
5.2	EFFECTIVENESS – INTERNAL MARKET SCOREBOARD	94
5.2.1	<i>The Internal Market Scoreboard</i>	<i>96</i>
5.2.2	<i>Effectiveness of the EU</i>	<i>98</i>
6.	CONCLUSION	99
7.	TABLE OF AUTHORITIES	104

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is now experiencing a particular challenge revolving around the fundamental problems posed by enlargement to the governing of the Union. The debate is more specifically over the EU's capacity to act effectively with an increased membership base and with the continual support of its citizens. At the core of these problems are concerns over the effectiveness and legitimacy of the EU as an enlarged Union, and from this, the term absorption capacity has emerged in popular EU discourse. This has introduced a new discussion regarding the Union's ability, or as some would argue, inability, to allow new members into the EU (Economist 2006). Although earlier enlargements did generate certain similar concerns among the members of the Union, absorption capacity was never a prominent concept in the discourse before the eastern enlargement of 2004. Subsequently, there has been puzzlement regarding the introduction of absorption capacity into the EU debates. Resulting from calls for clarification, there have been recent attempts from the EU to define and explore the meaning of the term.

I will in this thesis investigate the term absorption capacity, its meaning, usage, and its implications for the Union. Based on the assessment of the early enlargements from 1972 onwards and up to 2003, with the introduction of the idea of an eastern enlargement, I will argue that the issue of absorption capacity was hardly discussed, or even mentioned in the debates over enlargement of the EU. Moreover, when concerns were raised, this attracted limited attention; these concerns were vaguely defined and had a limited impact on the accession of the new states.

This situation changed radically with the enlargement to Eastern and Central Europe. Absorption capacity was brought into the enlargement debate and attracted considerable attention, and there is a tendency that the term may be used increasingly in the discourse surrounding future enlargements. Given that attempts have now been made to deal with absorption capacity in a more systematic manner, I shall

empirically examine these efforts made by the Commission and the European Parliament to clarify and define the term.

In the final section of this thesis, I will tentatively consider the actual level of absorption capacity in the EU in relation to the key issues of legitimacy and effectiveness. Concerns of legitimacy shall be assessed by analysing Eurobarometer surveys, and the effectiveness of the EU on the basis of the Internal Market Scoreboard, measuring the degree of effectiveness of the member states in transposing and implementing EU decisions. Following from this analysis, I will argue that the absorption capacity of the EU, based on these measures at least, seems to be unaffected.

The term absorption capacity was first mentioned in EU discourse when the criteria for membership were established in the Copenhagen criteria of 1993. This states that

“Membership presupposes the candidate’s ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (...). The Union’s capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries.”¹

Consequently, the term has become descriptive of the Union’s supposed ability to take in new member states, vis-à-vis the readiness of the new member states themselves. The sudden burst of interest in absorption capacity could, according to the Economist (2006), prove ‘misleading, dishonest and damaging’ for the EU, not least due to the lack of explanatory attempts at defining the phrase. Following these concerns for a heuristic clarity of the concept, pressure mounted for an official clarification of absorption capacity. According to the Copenhagen Criteria; if a potential candidate state voices interest in becoming a part of the community, and fulfils these certain criteria, that state should consequently be given accession to the EU. In this respect, the capacity of the EU to absorb new member states seems to

¹ European Council in Copenhagen June 21 – 22 1993, Presidency Conclusions.

have been of secondary importance (Economist 2006). Yet, the discussion regarding this lacks clarity.

1.1 Research question and aim of the thesis

Enlargement of the EU will as such be the central topic for the subsequent discussion, based around the 2004 and the 2007 enlargements. This wave of enlargement has been seen in some quarters to have led to the sense of exhaustion fatigue that pervades around the EU. Following from this, the phrase absorption capacity was brought into EU discourse. Discussions within European Union studies often revolve around so-called buzz words, allowing academics to further our knowledge based on an analysis of the concepts. In the recent past, there have been a number of such buzz words in EU discourse, most notably subsidiarity (Blichner and Sangolt 1994, Føllesdal 1998), and flexibility (Stubb 2002). This thesis can be seen in parallel to these, as an investigation into a popularised new buzz word and its meaning.

The concept of absorption capacity as explained in this, does not automatically fit into any overarching theory of the EU, and the discussion does neither deductively follow from a particular theoretic starting point. As such, the discussion will not be grounded in one particular theoretic perspective. Instead, the investigation is of an inductive nature, taking its starting point as the resurgence of the concept of absorption capacity. The theoretical discussion will as such instead concentrate on conceptualisations of effectiveness and legitimacy, which are seen to be at the core of the term.

My argument suggests that the enlargements prior to that of 2004 did not lead to discussions over absorption capacity, but that this was brought into the discussion at the time of the major expansion to the East. The purpose of my investigation is to discuss and understand the concept of absorption capacity, the difficulties surrounding it and its implications for the Union. How successfully do questions of the EU's legitimacy and effectiveness explain the resurgence of the term, and do

either take precedence in the discussions of enlargement? My work will start from the position that absorption capacity questions the EU's capacity to govern with a substantially increased member state base. With possibilities for further expansions still, how does the EU's ability to govern in the best possible way interact with how effectively and legitimately this is achieved?

The objective of this study therefore is an investigation into the concept of absorption capacity within the EU, understood through a *history* of enlargement, before *clarifying* the meaning of the concept in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness, and then proceeding finally to *assess* empirically the current absorption capacity of the Union. More specifically, the research question asks; **how can absorption capacity be understood in the context of European enlargement, in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness, and what is the current state of it when empirically measured?**

The significance of absorption capacity in EU discourse is reflected in the fact that both the Commission and the European Parliament have now made considerable efforts to clarify the term. Their approaches will be discussed in the following. I shall argue, following these efforts, that absorption capacity is to a considerable degree a result of concerns over the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the EU. Subsequently, an evaluation of the actual situation of absorption capacity will follow, using Eurobarometer surveys and the Internal Market Scoreboard to tentatively measure this. In this sense, it may be questioned if absorption capacity is such a pressing matter after all and if the feeling of fatigue is grounded in real problems that the EU faces? It will be argued that the absorption capacity of the EU is not as problematic as the discourse indicates.

It shall be argued that one cannot entirely reject the concept of absorption capacity simply because it suggests that the EU is a club and not a network. I will argue contrary to this that although absorption capacity does not convey the entire nature of the EU, the current set of enlargement debates have shown that in practical terms, membership of the EU is not open, and in this sense the EU does appear to have club, as well as network, characteristics.

The hypotheses underlying the discussion suggest that the stronger the sense of legitimacy, the more extensive absorption capacity inherent in the EU will be. It shall also be shown that, the larger the degree of effectiveness, the larger the degree of absorption capacity within the EU.

There are a number of limitations within this thesis. Firstly, there are concerns over how to measure an abstract concept like absorption capacity. The discussion and focus that is suggested will deal with general capacity issues, and the timeline chosen focuses on the years from 2003 to 2007. The Eurobarometer surveys that have been used for this discussion have not yet been released in their entirety due to the short time that has passed since they were published, and therefore the discussion is based on crude measures, on the descriptive explanations of these findings. This has meant that what would have proved interesting in variations in the different variables, has proved technically impossible to perform, as these will subsequently be released in full at a future date.

The EU and its development and functioning are the focus of European integration studies, a branch of the field which has traditionally attempted to explain European integration in one comprehensive, theoretical model. The so-called grand integration theories, or ‘middle range’ theories (Rosamond 2000:108), of neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, have been the dominant theories in studies of the EU’s development. Recently, the research of multi-level governance has questioned the logic of these grand theories, challenging the notion that one theory alone can satisfactorily account for the complexity revolving European development. Yet, the overarching theoretical perspectives on European integration seem ill-fitting to my investigation into absorption capacity. The discussion will therefore be based upon a theoretic discussion of legitimacy and effectiveness.

The structure of this thesis is arranged as follows; chapter one introduces the phenomenon of absorption capacity and provides methodological considerations, chapter two discusses the enlargements from 1972 up until 1995, where the EU’s absorption capacity was not a part of the discourse. Chapter three argues that

absorption capacity followed from the idea of the enlargement to the East. Chapter four contains a conceptual discussion of absorption capacity, focusing on the Commission, the European Parliament and the media's take on absorption capacity, followed by a discussion of the theoretics behind legitimacy and effectiveness. Chapter five contains a tentative evaluation of empirical findings of absorption capacity. Conclusionary comments are presented in chapter six.

1.2 Absorption Capacity – Introducing the term

Absorption capacity first entered the EU discourse following extensive pressure from the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs)² that the EC set out conditions for future enlargements as well as time prospectuses for these. The European Council meeting in Lisbon of June 1992 requested that the Commission should evaluate the progress and the future development of partnership with the CEECs (Skålnes 2005:219). In a report from December 1992, the Commission recognized the importance of the security dimension, and the benefits of the inclusion of these countries into the coherent security structure of the EC. The European Council meeting in Edinburgh December 1992 postponed the decision of potential enlargement, to the Copenhagen Council meeting in June 1993 where the Commission's proposal that membership would be granted as soon as the countries fulfilled the economic and political conditions was set out. Notably, two additional conditions were introduced; firstly that the EC would have the capacity to accept and absorb the new members, and secondly, that the enlargement would not challenge further European integration (ibid).

The uncertainties regarding absorption capacity led to calls for a specific definition and clarification of the term from an official EU perspective. The Commission met this by publishing a report in November last year (2006), titled *Enlargement Strategy*

² Central- and Eastern European Countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as Cyprus and Malta.

and Main Challenges for 2006 – 2007, where attempts were made to define and make sense of the problematics regarding enlargement. In December 2006, the European Parliament presented their views in a *resolution on the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States (2006/2226(INI))*.

The discussion will show how absorption capacity can be seen to encompass both legitimacy and effectiveness.

Table 1.1. Absorption capacity

		Effectiveness	
		High	Low
Legitimacy	High	Large	Seminar
	Low	Elitist	Small

Table 1.1 illustrates that a high degree of effectiveness combined with a high degree of legitimacy may be said to constitute a large degree of absorption capacity. Conversely, a low degree of effectiveness teamed with a low degree of legitimacy, illustrates a small degree of absorption capacity. A lower degree of effectiveness combined with a high degree of legitimacy converges to the notion of absorption capacity as a seminar, whereas a high degree of effectiveness and a low degree of legitimacy together account for a more elitist perspective on absorption capacity. A low degree of effectiveness would imply that all member states implement fewer policies, and additionally that the variation in the overall implementation is widely spread; ie member states do not implement the same directives. A high degree of effectiveness would suggest the opposite, namely that the degree of implementation is high or at least at the same level as before the eastern enlargements. Secondly, the variation in the implementation is low between the member states. A high degree of legitimacy would suggest widespread support in the EU for the enlargement project.

1.3 Context: Enlargement Fatigue in the EU – the Revival of Absorption Capacity

Absorption capacity has re-emerged in EU discourse within a political environment holding a pessimistic tone. Crisis, fatigue, collapse, loss of direction, and threats are all part of this discourse. Although there may be several factors contributing to this, the most immediate one seems to be enlargement (Meyer et al 2004:90). The connection between this sense of crisis and enlargement fatigue seems a logical one to make. As a political entity, the EU is neither a state nor a traditional forum for co-operation between states, but is rather a merging of nation states, equipped with both supranational and intranational institutions and forms of co-operation (ibid:27). The exceptional *sui generis* character of the political framework may in itself add to the confusion and the alienation felt by European citizens, which in turn fuels the sense of fatigue.

Post-war Europe experienced some major political changes regarding international relations, and the establishment of the EU was central in this. Claims were made that the sovereignty of the nation-state had been eroded to such an extent that the Westphalian state system was being transcended by the emergence of a ‘neo-medieval’ system; an arrangement consisting of overlapping and multiple forms of authority and identity, standing in stark contrast to the distinctive structures of sovereign nation-states (Hyde-Price 1999:114). This left concerns over the way in which the EU would be able to operate in such a Europe ‘growing together’, or at least without a prominent east-west division. Following this development up to today, the task for the EU now is how to deal with enlargement in the best possible way without losing the advantages of the existing forms of institutionalised co-operation, and without undermining the dynamism and integrity of the integrating process (ibid: 115), which is illustrated in debates of widening versus deepening prominent in EU integration discourse. Consequently, there have been claims that enlargement inevitably will lead to some form of “differentiated integration”, integration at “multiple speeds”, and in “concentric circles” (ibid: 116). One can see European

integration up until now as having developed within a structure of a wealthy core territory, and additional concentric circles evolving around this centre. This pattern is said to have been driven by the dialectics of integration and expansion (Vobruba 2003:35).

The European Union has from the very beginning held an optimistic view of the future European political community. The idea of a more integrated and expanded entity has since the start been the prominent ideal. Indeed, the EU always strove for the goal of an 'ever closer union'³. Now, this goal seems to have become questioned more strongly than ever. Governments, politicians and academics alike struggle to see where this ever changing and expanding process will end, and subsequently what this will mean for the Union. There is an image forming that those one is to bond politically with are more different socially and culturally than in the past, and consequently an EU together in solidarity does seem harder to achieve or even to accept. All in all, the project of an ever closer Union is perceived to have come to a standstill, and there are widespread doubts about the future direction of the EU. Enlargement thus brings with it a number of fundamental questions.

The EU has historically dealt well with the accession of new members. Its history as such has always been one of permanent expansion (Durand & Missiroli 2006:1). This began with the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark in 1973, when the original six countries in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) became nine. By the mid nineties, the Union had grown to comprise 15 member states. The end of the Cold War provided Europe with a historic opportunity for those who dreamed of a united Europe. Ever since the post World War One era, and Coudenhove-Kalergi's movement for European unity and his vision of a pan-Europa (Stirk 1996), there had been continuous discussions over bringing Europe closer together. Until the end of the Cold War, this proved to be an elusive goal. At the Copenhagen summit of June 1993, the EU opened the door to membership for post-

³ From the Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community 1957 signed in Rome.

Communist countries by accepting eastern enlargement in principle, and Europe's east-west division started to crumble. The 2004 enlargement was said to have finally healed the rift opened up by the east-west division and the Cold War, welcoming ten new states with very different political experiences. This proved the most extensive enlargement of the EU's history yet (Szczzerbiak & Taggart 2005:2), both in terms of numbers and heterogeneity. The entry of Bulgaria and Romania in January 2007⁴ adds another two countries to the Union. According to the Commission, the accession of these two states is viewed as an "integral part" of the 2004 enlargement⁵. Croatia and Turkey, the next potential candidates, have both started their negotiations. However, in the words of the president of the Commission José Barroso; there is now a need for an "institutional overhaul" in the aftermath of the accessions of Bulgaria and Romania, and there have been subsequent calls for a freeze on enlargement (Aftenposten 2006b). The succession of enlargements, and the resulting character of the EU as a political system in constant change, continues to be a matter of frequent discussion (Karlsson 2001:130).

Enlargement is thus seen as a historic opportunity, as well as a moral and political obligation, for the creation of a united and peaceful, democratic Europe (Rehn 2005a, 2005b, Enlargement Newsletter 2006). Enlargement is further expected to contribute to improved security, increased economic opportunity and enhanced political and diplomatic weight for Europe on the global political stage (Baun 2000:228, Rehn 2005a, 2005b). From this, one can derive that enlargement is a contributing factor in making the EU a more competitive and dynamic institution, and to a larger degree making it better prepared to meet the challenges of a globalised and constantly changing world⁵.

⁴ The Accession Treaties were signed on 25 April 2005; both countries entered the EU 1 January 2007.

⁵ Enlargement Newsletter 20 June 2006.

Enlargement of the EU has led to a discussion on Europe's borders and whether, and if so how, our perception of Europe is changing. Frontiers are not set in stone, and the territorial nation-state Westphalian understanding of borders we have become accustomed to may be challenged. What has traditionally been seen as more western European values are now increasingly transferred eastwards in addition to the earlier southern enlargements? What are, if any, the geographic limits to enlargement? How will the future borders of Europe be defined? How can the Union ensure that enlargement will not lead to new divisions and conflicts within Europe? What will an enlarged EU look like, in terms of institutional architecture and internal political dynamics? These are all questions that have taken on great significance following the debate over absorption capacity and enlargement fatigue; "the feelings of anxiety and lack of energy that have suddenly checked the seemingly inexorable growth of the European Union" (Sunday Herald 2005).

There are other indicators of problems within the EU system; the Maastricht Treaty was for instance poorly received by public opinion, and the European Monetary System nearly collapsed under pressures from financial markets in 1992 and 1993. Economic recession further increased an already high unemployment rate, making Europe's failure to deal with its economic and social problems evident (Monitoring European Integration 6 1995). This accumulated into the belief that Europe was at a crossroads and questions developed concerning whether European institutions were still adequate in dealing with the pressing new challenges.

Lastly, there is the problem of uncertainty; the fact that European integration has never reached a *definite* form or content, neither for its institutions, procedures and competencies, nor for its members. Its characteristic mark was that it always resembled a 'process' towards an unknown destination (Deubner 1999:118).

The problems posed by enlargement may not be the easiest to solve, but the political will of the EU remains clear. The legal basis of enlargement is in the Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (1992), which states that "any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6 (1) may apply to become a member of the

Union”. This treaty provision however, does not mean all European countries must apply, or that the EU must accept all applications (European Commission 2006c, Rehn 2006).

The previous enlargements were facilitated by more tailor-made solutions, whereas the countries of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements are considered more difficult to adopt in present circumstances. The political landscape of Europe is now considered more complex than before. Enlarging to the east inevitably leads to a reduction in the previous level of cohesion. In this sense, the perceived crisis seems to be an inescapable consequence of enlargement.

1.4 Operationalisations of terms

The term absorption capacity will be used as explained in chapter 1.2, and further a theoretic clarification of the term will be discussed in chapter 4. The Penguin dictionary defines *to absorb* as “to make part of an existing whole; to incorporate, to engage or occupy wholly”. *Capacity* is defined as “the maximum amount that can be contained or produced, ability or talent, power or potential” (Penguin Books 2002). I will argue that, as important in all political systems, legitimacy and effectiveness are pivotal in the study of the EU. Legitimacy will regards absorption capacity be operationalised according to measures found in the Eurobarometer surveys. Firstly, the focus will be on whether the respondents consider the EU to be a “good thing”; the general support for membership of the EU. Secondly, the life satisfaction of the European citizens is taken into account, further the perceived benefits from EU membership and lastly, support for further enlargement. Effectiveness will be operationalised by the Internal Market Scoreboard, measuring the degree and speed with which member states transpose Internal Market directives into national law.

1.5 Methodological Considerations

1.5.1 Absorption capacity as a qualitative case study

This thesis is mainly an explorative study, in that it seeks to investigate how concerns over legitimacy and effectiveness specifically, and the enlargement fatigue more generally, have shaped the current mood of the EU, leading to the introduction of the concept of absorption capacity. The discussion will in general terms be based on identifying the concept of absorption capacity and analysing its possible implications, its re-emergence and limitations. In methodological terms, this is considered best achieved using a descriptive methodological approach.

In terms of methodological structure, the argument of this thesis is divided into three parts. Firstly, a historic focus is presented, arguing that the concerns relating to absorption capacity were not evident in the EU prior to 2003 and the prospect of eastern enlargement. Secondly, the debate following the enlargement of 2004 is discussed, alongside the definitions and clarifications that followed the term's re-emergence. Thirdly, I evaluate the actual situation of absorption capacity in the EU by assessing survey data. In this section, different conceptualisations of legitimacy and effectiveness are discussed and followed by an assessment of crude measures found in the Eurobarometer surveys and the Internal Market Scoreboard respectively.

The research strategy used is of an intensive character, as the focus is on identifying several variables in one or few entities (Hellevik 2002:97-98). Intensive research studies provide detailed knowledge on the chosen subject, placing it within a real life context and thus increasing the potential for a comprehensive understanding of the subject (ibid: 98). As the purpose is to investigate one phenomenon within the EU context and possible variables related to this, assuming that effectiveness and legitimacy play an important role; an intensive research strategy is considered the most appropriate approach to analysing absorption capacity.

The case study as a research strategy is defined as “*an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (Yin 2003:13). As such, the case study is preferable when examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. In accordance with Yin (ibid: 13), this method will be used, enabling the coverage of contextual conditions; given that they are pertinent to the phenomenon under study. EU politics can be said to be characterised by its contextual conditions, and as the EU is a unique political construction, it is difficult to compare it with other organisations or states. Therefore, given that the purpose is to gain a better understanding of an isolated and complex instance, a qualitative case study approach is considered the most appropriate method of analysis.

A distinctive feature of qualitative as opposed to quantitative research, is that the data used will constitute of pre-existing literature and not numbers (Thagaard 2003:13). Here, material of primary and secondary sources are used; articles, books, speeches, and reports. The aim of the qualitative case study is neither to provide statistical representative data, nor to generalise findings to some larger population to which the specific case belongs. It is rather to be able to discover the essence in a complex relation, without claiming validity for other cases. The case study thus provides an opportunity to focus on one particular phenomenon. Although there are claims that case studies are unscientific in that they do not hold statistical representability (Andersen 2003:14), these disadvantages do not take away from the potential advantages of a detailed insight into specific phenomena in their social context. Yet, as opposed to quantitative case studies, one cannot hold a statistical significant to be representative for phenomena outside the one we are studying. In this sense, there is a problem of generalisation in qualitative studies. The debate of whether the EU constitutes an n of 1, and subsequently as a consequence inductive generalisations from such studies cannot lead to “generally applicable knowledge”, is as old as the study of the EU (Jachtenfuchs 2005:279). Still, being able to make generalisations is not viewed a necessary goal, as I have no wishes to do so given the particular concept

studied. In this sense, I recognise the uniqueness of the EU in comparison to other organisations and states, and therefore consider it not purposeful to look for grounds on which to make generalisations given the distinct entity that is under study. As such, case study approaches will be the only viable option as the phenomenon under study is unique (Andersen 2003:61), and in the respect that the phenomenon of absorption capacity is unprecedented.

Case studies can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Yin 2003:14-15). Similarly this thesis uses mainly qualitative sources, yet a quantitative approach is additionally used in the form of data from Eurobarometer and the Internal Market Scoreboard, which are employed as a basis for the empirical discussion. Yet overall, the strategy taken is distinctly a qualitative approach.

1.5.2 Empirical Sources

The fundamental principle regarding sources is that all sources available on the subject should be taken into one's scientific work, in order to be able to claim a methodological completeness (Dahl 2002:50). However, as Dahl admits, this tends to be highly unrealistic and practically impossible in actual source gathering. As is suggested, I have chosen a sample of evidence, which is regarded as an adequate, comprehensive and representative selection. Sources that are used are of a cognitive character (ibid: 40), directed at past instances of enlargement.

The primary evidence used in this discussion consists of written documents⁶. The documents used have come in different forms, ie written reports, published articles, public administrative EU documents, formal studies of the same subject of study, as well as newspaper articles. I have been aware of potential bias, particularly in

⁶ Yin (2003:83) lists documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts as the most important sources used for/in case studies. The latter five have not been deemed fitting in this discussion, and so the primary evidence has been found in different sources of documents.

newspaper articles, yet the usefulness of such sources are considered to outweigh the potential bias, which in turn has been accounted for. It is important to note that overall, documents were produced for a specific purpose, as well as for a particular audience, which need be appreciated in terms of accuracy and usefulness of the interpretations (Yin 2003). Of specific importance to the analysis are the crude measures used from various Eurobarometer surveys regarding the legitimacy of the EU. The Internal Market Scoreboard has been used in order to examine the effectiveness of the EU. These represent elements of a more quantitative character in an otherwise qualitative survey, enabling one to get a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon that is absorption capacity.

There exist three principles or possible methods of data collection, all of which can strengthen the reliability and construct validity of a case study. The first one of these is the usage of multiple sources of evidence. This principle of data collection is based upon the theory of triangulation as a rationale for using multiple sources of evidence. In this study, I have drawn upon three or more sources, each converging on the same set of findings. Secondly, one could create a case study database, and thirdly create a chain of evidence. This has not been attempted here (ibid: 83, 97).

1.5.3 Reliability and Validity

Reliability is a measure of how accurately data has been handled, whilst validity is a measure of the relevance of the data used for the particular question under discussion (Hellevik 2002:183).

The discussion in this study is to a major extent based on written sources; and as such the reliability will relate to my interpretation and presentation of the text. The content of the various sources have to a large degree coincided with each other. The sources used have been available in Norwegian and/or English, which has reduced the need for any concerns over language related errors. All of the above contributes to the belief that reliability is satisfactorily accounted for in this study. The sources available on this subject appear to be limited, which makes it plausible to believe that

the sources used are collectively adequate as a basis for the discussion. As such, the validity of the sources seems to be of a satisfactory level.

The credibility of a study follows from an evaluation of the quality of the data considered (Thagaard 2003:178). Credibility also springs from the fact that the research has been performed in a method that is recognised and that one can have confidence in. As a consequence of the principle of subjectivity in qualitative research, credibility cannot be ascertained (ibid). I will argue that the data used from Eurobarometer should be accepted as credible, as it is commissioned by the EU and carried out by recognised survey companies. This also applies to the Internal Market Scoreboard.

The development of a case study design needs to maximise four conditions related to design quality (Yin 2003:19). The extent, to which my study can be considered valid, can be measured against the first, the second and the fourth criteria as presented by Yin. Firstly, construct validity is of importance, particularly in my discussion here. In this sense, I have had to establish correct operational measures for the concepts under study, particularly absorption capacity. Secondly, and of less importance here as this is a descriptive case study and not a casual or explanatory study, is internal validity. Internal validity focuses on establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships. Thirdly, external validity points to establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised. This deals with the problem of knowing whether a study's findings are generalisable beyond the scope of the immediate case study (ibid: 37). Survey research relies on statistical generalisation, whereas case studies rely on analytical generalisation to some broader theory (ibid). The last criterion is reliability, that is, demonstrating that the operation of a study can be repeated, with the same results, if done at a later point in time (ibid: 33-34).

The purpose of qualitative research, as is the objective here, is to understand the context within which a social phenomenon takes place, in order to create understanding of what is being studied (Thagaard 2003:193).

2. Lessons from the Past: Enlarging the Union in the Absence of concerns relating to Absorption Capacity

Enlargement has been at the heart of the EU's development over several decades (European Commission 2006a). In this chapter, by looking at the enlargements from 1972 to 1995, I will argue that these early enlargements did not cause such considerable apprehension as was the result of the later enlargements, and as such, discussions of absorption capacity were never had. This is not to say however, that there were no concerns over the consequences these enlargements would bring. The expansion southwards particularly prompted fears over the admission of the newly democratised, relatively poorer Mediterranean countries. Yet, absorption capacity was never defined, nor did it become a part of official EU discourse in the way in which the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 have prompted.

There are three main considerations which the EU needs to take into account when dealing with enlargement. Firstly, the European citizens need be considered for legitimacy reasons. Secondly, the community's set of rules must be accounted for, as each new member state must accept these to be allowed into the EU. Lastly, enlargements' financial consequences need be taken into account. Overall, the enlargements up until the one of 1995 did not generate such strong feelings in the public, one did not expect the new member states to challenge the *acquis* to a dramatic degree, and the perceived financial costs were not too great. Yet, these enlargements did elicit certain concerns.

Enlargement was seen as a natural part of the development of the Community. The overall benefits of geographical expansion were stressed, such as the strengthening of the EU's position as a soft power. Enlargement has included the consolidation of democracy, the establishing of human rights and the introduction of stability across the continent. European integration was as such initiated for political rather than economic reasons. Particularly the 'German question' was important for Europe in

the post war era, with France seeking more permanent control over the German potential, and the Community offering Germany an opportunity to escape the fate of an outcast nation (Scharpf 1999:44). Along the way, strong economic incentives added to the European project. The community has become a stronger international player, increasing the weight of Europe globally. The economic benefits from enlargement include increased prosperity and competitiveness, enabling the member states to better deal with the challenges posed by globalisation. Nevertheless, the enlargement process remained questioned amongst member states and citizens alike.

The enlargements have added increasingly different historical experiences, economic structures, and political priorities to the EU, and with this they have “led to a search for new unity in diversity and greater deepening of integration” (Kaiser and Elvert 2004:2). Once inside the Union, the newer member states are exposed to various internal pressures of common policy making, as well as inclusion in transnational networks. This opens the path for cross-country socialisation, which in turn adds to their progressive ‘Europeanisation’ (ibid: 3). Accession and membership of the EU have initiated a degree of political socialisation into the original and long term objectives of the EU and its founding members, in turn clarifying competing visions of European integration. Up until the third wave of enlargement of 1995, the European integration dynamics led to a ‘deepening’ of the EU despite its vast heterogeneity, allowing the necessary adjustments inside the EU in preparation for each enlargement (Elvert 2004:205-206). Some countries have even experienced inclusion to what one considers the ‘core Europe’ within the enlarged Union, as Finland illustrates after its acceptance of the Euro. EU enlargement has far reaching implications not only upon the political shape of Europe, but also for the institutional set-up and major policies of the Union. This is reflected in the cumbersome discussions over the budget, the agricultural and regional policies as well as the representation of members in the different institutions (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005:3).

In the summer of 1952, France, West-Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), on the grounds that this would contribute to increased economic growth, a rise in employment rates and higher standards of living more generally (Førland & Claes 2002:29). The forces behind this integrational project were fivefold; economic factors, geopolitics, federalism in principle as well as American pressure for a federal western Europe, and the defeat of the extreme nationalism of the second world war, all contributed to the idea of closer co-operation between European states (ibid:15). With the Treaty of Rome of 1957, the ECSC reformed into the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom; the customs union now sought to cover all sectors combined with co-operation over nuclear energy (ibid:45). In 1973, the community expanded for the first time, when the original six member states became nine with the accession of Denmark, Ireland, and the UK. Five enlargements later, and the EU of today comprises 27 members.

The nine new member states which entered the community before the 2004 enlargement had in advance of their accessions all participated in various forms of institutionalised western and European co-operation outside of an EU context. At different points in time, they became members of what came to be known as the OECD in 1961-62. Greece became associated with the EEC in 1961; Spain negotiated trade arrangements with it. Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK, together with Norway and Switzerland, created the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960-61. The founding states of EFTA, with the exception of Portugal, did in fact fulfil the EEC/EC's general conditions for membership, whereas Spain, Portugal and Greece did not (Elvert 2004:197). These forms of co-operation prior to accession may have contributed to these countries' uncomplicated integration into the European community. Apart from certain singular events, these early waves of enlargement did not cause controversy comparable to that following the later enlargement of 2004, and concerns were not raised over the institutions of the EU and their capacity to integrate its new members.

2.1 First Enlargement of 1973: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom

The EEC expanded for the first time since its foundation in 1957, when Denmark, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the original six member states. The first enlargement stirred similar emotions in the original member states as those we have seen following the eastern enlargement of 2004. The six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC)⁷ feared that the expansion to Denmark, Ireland and the UK would undermine the *finalité politique* of the EC and similarly prevent the deepening of the Community (Kaiser & Elvert 2004:2). Other more specific fears included the relegation of the Christian Democrats in the European Parliament and EC politics as such, as they did not have any like-minded parties in Denmark nor in the UK (ibid:2).

The British decision to apply for EEC membership in 1961 was a result of a complex mixture of economic and political objectives. Their second application in 1967 was motivated by the failure of the British government's economic policies. De Gaulle predictably vetoed the British application for the second time in 1967, and it was then left on the table to be taken up after the European Council of the Hague in 1969. This eventually led to British accession to the EC under terms negotiated by the Conservatives under Edward Heath. The UK had no Christian Democratic party, and the Conservatives were excluded from the cohesive policy community of continental European Christian Democrats, a party family which had been an important driving force behind 'core Europe' integration after 1945 (Kaiser 2004:20).

After de Gaulle's veto, the British government set up the EFTA of the so-called 'outer Seven'; together with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland (ibid:13). EFTA was as such viewed as a stepping stone to facilitate later contact with the EC regards membership. The Association was regarded a temporary

⁷ France, Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg founded the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951-52, which reformed into the European Economic Community in 1957. In 1967, the abbreviation EC was introduced. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 reforms the community into the EU.

arrangement and a tool for improving the UK's bilateral relationship with the EC (ibid: 21).

British anti-German sentiments may have been of some importance in leading to the scepticism found in the community toward British accession. This is illustrated by Macmillan's fear that the EC would be dominated either by a 'Fourth Reich' after Adenauer or by de Gaulle whom he alternately compared with Napoleon and Hitler (ibid). The British attitude to 'core Europe' was generally marked with prejudice, in that the EEC "had been invented and was still run by Catholic, culturally backward Conservatives" (ibid). British Conservatives and Socialists had very little understanding of political Catholicism and Christian Democracy, which they considered "backward cultural values" (ibid).

Ireland saw EC membership as a way to 'free' itself from the UK. For Ireland, agriculture was the most important sector where membership of the EC would prove beneficial. The CAP constituted a 'goldmine' for Ireland, providing a very favourable context for productivity increases and a greater orientation towards exports (Moxon-Browne 2004:58). European integration for a newcomer was perceived as a way of protecting nationhood while maximising the opportunities offered by a more globalised world (ibid:66). Ireland derived from its membership of the EU not so much a feeling that its nation state had been 'rescued' à la Milward, except perhaps from its ex-colonial dependency on Britain, but more as a release of innate possibilities in social, political and economic terms.

In Denmark, the support for membership also depended on anticipated agrarian benefits, rather than general economic gains from participation (Elvert 2004:199). Denmark was however geographically closer to the original members of the EC, than Ireland was. "The British move [toward the EC] promised a unification of Denmark's main trading partners and a solution to the old problem of securing export markets for agricultural exports" (Laursen 2004:37). The negotiation process and the decision to join were highly politicised because future possible developments in the Community and in the institutional character became contested issues in the debate (ibid: 41).

The first enlargement of the EC brought out similar fears to the 2004 enlargement; expanding outside of what was seen as ‘core Europe’ brought concerns over how this would effect the deepening of the EU. The trade-off between enlargement and deepening has been a prevalent one ever since. The British applications were the most notable as they stand as the only ones to have been vetoed in the history of European enlargement. Danish and Irish accessions proved somewhat easier, but still courted highly politicised discussions. This wave of enlargement set a precedent, ‘core Europe’ seemed undefined, and as such future accessions to the EC were to be expected.

2.2 Second and third Enlargements of 1981 and 1986: Greece, Spain, and Portugal

Greece joined the Community in 1981, with Spain and Portugal following suit in 1986. There are several similarities in these enlargements, and for that reason they are looked upon collectively. The Mediterranean expansion took place under the continued impact of the systemic Cold War conflict, at a time when democratisation and a solid anchorage in the western world were important for the EC. This gave an additional impetus for the integration of the newly established Mediterranean democracies (Elvert 2004:202). Nevertheless, these enlargements did cause some concern in the Community. With the backdrop of the structural economic crisis of the 1970s, and the internal dispute about the structure of the budget, concerns flourished about the effects of fiscal transfers to the economically under-developed and agrarian South, and the consequences this would have on the EC.

The application for the second enlargement round which would allow Greece into the community, was submitted only two years after the entry of Denmark, Ireland, and the UK, at a time when the Community was already having difficulties dealing with the effects of the first enlargement (Sjursen 2006a:20). The prospect of another enlargement so shortly after the first provoked a “major outburst of angst” (ibid). There were doubts concerning whether the structure of the Commission and the

Council would survive the addition of yet more member governments, each with its own special national interest to protect and defend. In November 1975, the *Economist* stated that it was the “institutional implications of further enlargement which horrify officials in Brussels” (in Sjursen 2006a:20). This mirrors the debates raised in articles on the 2004 enlargements.

Greece, Portugal, and Spain had previously been excluded from membership of the EC due to their political systems (Elvert 2004:197). In 1974, the military government led by Colonel Papadopoulos, Colonel Makarezos and Brigadier Pattakos, collapsed in Greece. In Portugal, the Salazar regime was overthrown. A year on, Franco’s regime in Spain came to an end. As these countries had been politically marginalized due to the authoritarian character of their political systems, EC membership seemed to offer great potential for their newly democratised structures. Being a part of a bigger democratic community with the external pressures for domestic economic, political, and societal modernisation following from this, provided vast opportunities for improvements in these countries (ibid).

The Greek application was by no means an uncomplicated process; it was met with considerable scepticism (Ifantis 2004:80). Like Portugal and Spain, Greece too was considered a fragile democracy in Europe’s periphery. Security considerations were important in all three cases. This had even more significance regards Greece, due to the Greek-Turkish conflict, of which the Commission wanted to avoid being drawn into (ibid). The Greek admission was thus seen as a political decision, carrying a serious risk of embroiling the Community in the Greek-Turkish dispute. In contrast with the 1973 enlargement, when the transitional arrangements were seen as exclusively to the advantage of the candidate states, in the case of Greece, negotiations were aimed at “protecting the Community from the impact of the admission of a relatively under-developed country” (ibid:82). Athens repeatedly emphasised that Greece would not be seeking major economic support, and that its membership would not present the EC with any serious financial challenges, and that

in any case, its impact upon the balance of budgetary advantages within the EC would be rather small (ibid).

Portugal's pro-European outlook stemmed from decolonisation and the institutionalisation of democracy (Pinto & Teixeira 2004:127). Its approach to Europe was determined by a set of factors, the first being that the dictatorship had accepted the economic aspects of the intergovernmental co-operation, while rejecting the political facets, as well as any supranational or integrationist model. Additionally, Portugal depended upon the narrow scope of the regime's foreign policy, the development of economic and social factors were therefore seen as paramount. Europe was thus considered a necessity, not a project (ibid). As a result of the military coup of 1974, Portugal was a fragile democracy in desperate need for economic as well as political support, which was offered to them from organisations like the EC. The first freely elected government opened for applying for EC membership, declaring this to be the strategic objective and political priority of 1976 (Elvert 2004:201).

There were several fundamental obstacles in the way of Portuguese accession. Firstly, there was the country's low level of economic development, secondly, the authoritarian nature of the regime, and lastly the colonial problem (Pinto & Teixeira 2004:118). The military coup in 1974 paved the way for institutionalisation of Portuguese democracy and decolonisation (ibid: 119). The Commission granted Portugal economic assistance and the negotiations were to last for seven years. However, the negotiation process was complex due to Portugal's economic situation after its transition. The continuing governmental instability was also a cause for concern, so was the political and constitutional nature of the Portuguese regime. The country's constitution was revised in 1982, which abolished the Council of the Revolution and the National Defence Law, and the armed forces accepted their subordination to civilian political authorities (ibid:122).

As Portugal negotiated for EC membership, Spain conducted negotiations of their own, which proved another obstacle rather than the advantage one would have

expected. Spain, a larger country with a larger economy, did not share Portugal's history of close relations with European economic institutions. Portugal hoped to achieve a quicker process by keeping its entry proposals separate from those of Spain. This proved not to be the best of strategies, as the EC policy was to negotiate with them simultaneously, leading to the two year delay of Portuguese accession, until all the "dossiers on Spain had been concluded" (ibid). In 1990, Portugal lost its status as an 'under-developed country', a label they had struggled with for years.

Spain's accession negotiations started in 1978, as did Portugal's. The President of the European Council, which was in the hands of the UK at the beginning of 1977, stressed the importance of enlargement as an investment in Europe's democratic future. Spain had long standing aspirations for European membership, "officially expressed since 1957 under the Franco regime"; but the prevailing political condition of Franco's dictatorship did not represent an adequate basis for membership.

The French were quick to express their scepticism regards the Spanish accession (de la Guardia 2004:102). A report published by the National Council of Young French Farmers in May 1976 carried the title "Spain: A Shock for Europe". The integration of Spain into the EC was viewed as the most important political and economic disruption since the creation of the Common Market (ibid). The French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac remarked that Spain's entrance to the EC would be 'unbearable' for French agriculture. The 1980s' outburst of enthusiasm for Europe was connected with what was termed 'the overcoming of periphery trauma'. In April 1978, after applications for membership had been submitted by Spain, Greece, and Portugal, the European Commission presented the European Council with a report entitled "Reflections on the Problems of Enlargement" (ibid:102). The Commission raised concerns that the three southern European applicants put such a burden of political responsibility upon the EC that they would not be able to avoid enlargement without renouncing the very principles on which it had been founded. The Parliament however, declared themselves strongly in favour of the integration of the three applicant states. Again, this enlargement round seemed to produce comparable

emotions and concerns in the existing member states, prompting discussions similar to those following the 2004 enlargement based around equivalent concerns. Yet, there was no mentioning of the capacity of the community to include these members.

2.3 Fourth Enlargement of 1995: Austria, Finland, and Sweden

This round of enlargement was less cumbersome than the previous round, which in part was due to the fact that the accessions of these countries were seen as a more natural addition to the established community. The fact that they were already members of the EFTA illustrates this. These states represented highly developed economies, and became net contributors to the budget. The concerns related to their accessions were therefore not economic in character, but rather related to political matters. Concerns included, for instance, that the addition of Austria could lead to the formation of a 'Germanic bloc', a ghost of the 'German problem' of the post war era. The neutrality status of both Austria and Sweden were therefore crucial, as was Finnish close relations with the Soviet Union. Whether these matters would undermine the strengthening of the EU's vision for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (Kaiser and Elvert 2004:3), was a part of the problem concerning the accession of these states. Neutrality, however, lost parts of its appeal with the receding Cold War, although at the same time, it was argued that the shadow of it had continued to leave its mark on Austrian policies, like when the government could only agree on obtaining observer status in the Western European Union and participation in the NATO cooperation programme, Partnership for Peace (Gehler 2004:143). In order to counteract the suspicion of still being 'German' or Anschluss orientated, Austria used 'Europe' as a means of identification, which in turn allowed for a more intensive link to Germany economically again (ibid:142). Finland, Sweden, and Austria had all preferred self exclusion beyond 1973 (Elvert 2004:197), until the collapse of the Soviet bloc paved the way for the accession of neutral and non-aligned countries like these (ibid: 202), completely transforming the European

security system. Like Sweden and Finland, Austria too was re-attracted to the EC as a result of the Single European Act initiative of 1986-87, and the danger of being excluded from a single European market (ibid:204).

Austria is a highly industrialised state geographically in the centre of Europe, and thus perceived differently than the peripheral states of Finland and Sweden. With the bipolarity following the Second World War, it became important for Austria not to be drawn into the East-West conflict, and therefore 'permanent' neutrality became an important imperative (Gehler 2004: 132). Austria applied for EEC association in the latter part of 1961, at a time where the building of the Berlin Wall was still underway and the Cuban crisis was about to start. In 1972-73, Austria's integration aims were partially fulfilled when Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland negotiated free trade treaties with the EC. In July 1972 these were signed, allowing Austria its partial economic participation whilst still keeping its neutrality (ibid: 137). The reformed international context with the fall of Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union had a major impact on Austrian integration policy (ibid: 140). "An intensified supranational integration policy followed after their entry into the EU, then with a conscious effective discarding of neutrality after 1995" (ibid: 138). Austria feared the threat of exclusion from an economically dynamic 'core' Europe, and EU membership was soon looked upon as a way of regaining sovereignty; a form of sharing 'supranational sovereignty'.

The Finnish case is an example of those states that decided to exclude themselves from the European integration process (Elvert 2004:197). Since the end of the Second World War and the FMCA Treaty with the Soviet Union, Finland had "subordinated its European relations to the former's security policy interests". Finland relied solely upon Nordic relations, although these resulted in problematic relations with the Soviets, not least due to the NATO membership status of Norway and Denmark. Finnish participation in the European integration process was seen as incompatible with Finnish security politics in relation to the Soviet Union. In this respect, Finnish self-exclusion was related to foreign policy, not rooted in euro scepticism (ibid).

With Finland, there had been a sense of distance from the EU, a fear of not being securely ‘in Europe’, and of being associated with the ‘wrong’ countries (Ojanen 2004:164). A peculiarity with the Finnish system was that integration policy was seen as part of the foreign policy, which in turn had been subordinated to security policy (ibid:150). The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 placed some restrictions on the Finnish military, as the country had partly sided with Germany in the war. The Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) concluded with the Soviet Union in 1948, was pivotal in setting the tone for Finland’s policies (ibid). Finland strove to keep out of Great Power confrontations and swore to neutrality. This proved problematic too, and required national decision making capacity, encompassing economic policy, and made it difficult to combine with membership of the EC. Finland became the textbook case of the adaptation typical of a small state, especially when in geographical proximity to a much larger and ideologically different state; ‘finlandisation’ (ibid: 151). Finnish membership negotiations started in March 1993, and were concluded one year later. Sweden and Austria’s willingness to enter the EU despite their policy of neutrality encouraged Finland (ibid: 160), who entered the Union in 1995. With both Finland and Sweden joining the EU, suspicions arose that the Nordics would form a bloc that would align with Germany (ibid: 158).

Sweden held a party consensus over non-alignment in peace time and neutrality as a goal in times of war (Gussarsson 2004:170). Non-alignment was believed to contribute to world peace and therefore remained the main motive behind a Swedish security doctrine, which gave the country a ‘third-way identity’ as international mediator and arbitrator. The Swedish economy was comparatively better after World War Two than that of most of Europe, with their infrastructure and industry intact. The Swedish economy was however highly dependent on exports of industrial goods. The poor state of Sweden’s economy was also crucial to its membership. The economic situation of the early 1990s was of specific importance, the concurrent American recession had weakened one of the most important markets for the Swedish export industry. This turned into a severe economic crisis. Swedish membership can thus be seen as a question of economic character. Discussions between Sweden and

the EC/EU went rather straightforwardly on the whole, partly because many questions had already been solved during the EEA negotiations. The only major difference arose as the Swedish government asked to be given the right to opt out of the third phase of the Economic and Monetary Union, which was not granted. Membership had to be sanctioned by the Swedish citizens in a referendum (*ibid*: 181). Sweden, the ‘reluctant European’, joined the Union on 1 January 1995.

The fourth round of enlargement was a much smoother process, marked by the accession of three countries which had traditionally been seen as more acceptable than those within the previous round. The accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden presented numerous challenges to the concept of the EU as providing foreign and security leadership. Issues of neutrality aside, this was a relatively peaceful accession, devoid of any general sense of enlargement fatigue.

2.4 The absence of concerns relating to Absorption Capacity

Within these early waves of enlargement, absorption capacity did not become as prominent or defined in negotiations. There were naturally considerable problems raised in these waves of enlargements, most notably the cases of the United Kingdom and the southern Mediterranean countries. However, in contrast to the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, these problems were not seen as insurmountable ones. They did not, for example, revolve around crucial issues such as European identity, or questioning of Europe’s frontiers. Clearly, similar concerns surround the recent accessions to the EU as they did in the early enlargements discussed above, markedly issues of economic capacity was prominent in negotiations. Yet, these concerns were not pivotal, as behind them lay the general consensus that there should be a concerted effort toward the ‘ever closer union’. In this respect, absorption capacity was never discussed nor defined; given the general agreement that enlargement and the identity of those enlarging would provide a stronger European community.

3. Contemporary Enlargements and the emergence of Absorption Capacity as a concept

It was argued in the last chapter that the enlargements up until the mid 1990s went remarkably well, and did not generate major controversies in the Union. Citizens voiced certain concerns and some apprehension was found regards the enlargements to the poorer and newly democratised south, yet the community did not experience the destructive disquiet which was to be seen later. However, this was soon to change. The theoretical opportunity provided for eastern enlargement by the Copenhagen Criteria set off feelings in the European public, academia and media not seen before. Eastern enlargement quickly became associated with the ‘absorption capacity’ of the Union. Reservations escalated over future enlargements as discussions of the dreaded political and economic consequences of the eastern expansion coloured the European mood. Enlargement was no longer seen as the positive and necessary commitment needed for an ever closer union, as had been celebrated in previous enlargements.

Enlargement has been at the heart of the EU’s development over several decades (European Commission 2006a). Being referred to as the “historic triumph” of the EU (Ash 2007a), indeed the political essence of European integration has been to overcome the division of Europe and to contribute to the peaceful unification of the continent (European Commission 2006a). Still, enlargement means change, and change carries the possibility of disruption, and the EU as such now seems plagued with self doubt. This can partly be seen as a consequence of its success. The changes represented by enlargement are expected to bring long term benefits and increase the prosperity of Europe, but the short term perceived costs; like the fear of immigrants taking local jobs and burdening local services, still cause major concern. The long term benefits have undoubtedly placed the EU in a strong negotiation position regards international affairs. Yet, at the beginning of the new millennium, the disadvantages, or what have been seen to be disadvantages, overshadowed the benefits of enlargement. Former president of the European Commission, Jacques

Delors⁸, stressed the magnitude of this negative atmosphere, arguing that it was the worst in the history of the EU; worse than the period of de Gaulle's "empty chair" in 1965, and worse than Thatcher's persistent demands for "our own money back" in the early 1980s (Economist 2007c).

Absorption capacity soon became the buzz word symbolising the atmosphere. With the upcoming enlargement of 2004, one looked to the Copenhagen Criteria of 1993, which states that "the Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries" (European Council 1993). However, the Union, it was now claimed, needed to possess the institutional, financial and political capacity in order to open its doors to new members.

The tensions which resulted in the absorption capacity resurgence stemmed from the perceived crisis of the decision making capabilities of the Union, questioning whether Europe was still capable of making operational decisions. The increasingly tough international economic competition Europe was facing added to the problem. Further, Europe was experiencing an identity crisis in which citizens increasingly questioned the purpose of European integration. The uncertainty about the Union's geographical contours added to the concerns as no practical entity can be built on a movement of rapid and continuous expansion whose limits are uncertain. At a time when the Union's own companies and employees were facing serious difficulties, the arrival of new members was perceived as too great a financial burden. A gap therefore developed between the Union's goal and its actual capabilities and readiness for this. This, in turn, led to the launch of absorption capacity as a concept within EU discourse.

⁸ President of the European Commission 1985-1995.

3.1 Fifth Enlargement 2004: Central and Eastern European Expansion

Following the decision made at the European Council at Copenhagen in December 2002, ten states from central and eastern Europe were welcomed into the European Union in 2004⁹; the largest enlargement yet in the history of the EU. Economic interests, historical experiences, and the political priorities of the new member states differed substantially from the Union of 15 members (Kaiser & Elvert 2004:1). This introduced concerns over the EU's ability to handle the increased heterogeneity which this integration round represented. Accession of these states brought with it many advantages, including increased export opportunities, access to skilled workers, and a chance to enhance the EU's security on the future border with the successor states of the former Soviet Union (ibid). However, the amount of concern this enlargement generated was not comparable to that of previous enlargements. In addition to the anxieties which the increased heterogeneity of the Union caused, further concerns related to the institutional balance between larger and smaller member states, particularly as the enlargement introduced only one "larger" country; Poland. This, it was feared, would have a negative impact upon political decision making and stability within the EU. Despite all the negativity however, the ten member states have, in the words of the Commission, reached an "excellent" level of compliance with EU law, making significant contributions to the work of EU institutions, as well as having generated increased levels of economic activity and produced high rates of economic growth (European Commission 2006a). The institutions of the EU have carried on working normally, despite the predictions of gridlock. In retrospect, the 2004 enlargement went remarkably well, both from the member states' perspective as well as the Union's, particularly when measured against the fears that preceded it (Economist 2005).

⁹ Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the European Union on 1 May 2004.

For eight of the ten accession countries; the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, the step into the European community marked the broader process of political, economic, and social transformation that had started with the collapse of communism and the transition to capitalist democracy in the years of 1989-91. The realigning of these countries' foreign policies into western European structures, the "returning to Europe", had been key ideas in their communist revolutions (Szczzerbiak & Taggart 2005:1). Therefore, there was a considerable degree of elite as well as popular support in favour of EU membership in these countries (*ibid*); accession was presented as a fundamental need following from historic, geographical, as well as psychological grounds.

The accession processes started with the conclusion of the Europe Agreements of 1991-1992, which consisted of bilateral treaties designed to create a series of dialogues between the acceding states and the EU. Following the Copenhagen Summit in 1993, it was declared that all Europe Agreement states were eligible for membership once they fulfilled the certain political, economic, and legal criteria. These criteria presupposed a working democratic structure, a functioning market economy, observing human and minority rights as well as accepting the community's *aquis*. At the Madrid summit in 1995, an additional criterion was included; all accession countries should hold the administrative capacity needed to meet the obligations set in the Copenhagen criteria. Subsequently, the former communist states applied for membership between 1994 and 1996 (*ibid*: 2). Negotiations for five of the countries were formally opened following the 1997 Luxembourg summit; including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, together with Cyprus. Slovakia was excluded from the negotiations for failing to meet the political criteria. At the Helsinki summit of December 1999, it was decided that Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Malta would start their negotiations in 2000. At the Laeken 2001 summit, the admission of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia together with Cyprus and Malta, was agreed in principle (*ibid*). The accession treaties were signed in April 2003, and the ten states entered the EU on the first of May 2004.

Cultural proximity was frequently emphasised when discussing relations between EU15 and the CEECs (Lundgren 2006:135). There was a focus on the features which united the EU15 and the CEECs; which consisted of a common history, a common culture, and a set of common values, sharing the same past and roots. There was also a perceived sense of duty on behalf of the EU given the commonalities shared. Despite this, there were still fears over the potential problems accession of these countries would bring to the EU. The CEECs were overall poorer and more reliant on agriculture, and thus concerns were raised over the inevitable burdening of the structural and agricultural funds. This, it was argued, would lead to a situation where the existing members would have to increase their contributions to the budget. Adding to these financial concerns was the fact that the enlargement included the accession of ten relatively poorer states, not just one or two. This would thus mean ten new states around the table in negotiations, with their own particular national preferences. Additionally, this presented problems in terms of language barriers, and the number of translations needed would be time consuming, slowing down the decision making process and making coming to decisions harder. On a more positive note, enlargement was expected to lead to an extended market which in turn would lead to increased trade and economic growth (ibid: 128). Interestingly, the decision to enlarge did however reflect that despite all this, the potential benefits related to enlargement were expected to outweigh the costs (European Commission 2006a).

Geopolitical considerations additionally contributed to the inclusion of the ten member states, particularly as European strategic priorities changed after the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. The danger to stability was now greater than what was previously perceived. Pressure from the accession states themselves also played an important role in the shifting mood in supporting their accessions (Skålnes 2005:220). Another factor which persuaded the EU that eastern commitment could no longer be postponed, was the rise of protectionist pressures in the eastern countries (ibid:221). The main threat after the fall of communism was that the changes brought about by the political and economic transitions taking place would lead to political instability and the abandonment of reform, as well as to nationalist conflicts along the

borders of the Community. There were concerns that this instability would have spillover effects that could potentially pose a security threat to Western Europe (ibid: 213-214). Geographical proximity reinforced this concern. Lastly, the Copenhagen summit convinced sceptical member states that the move towards eastern enlargement entailed no precise steps for inclusion in the near future. From an accession viewpoint, EU membership was seen as a motivating factor for democratisation.

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005:204) argue that economic and geopolitical interests alone could not fully account for the EU's decision to embark on such an "ambitious and costly enlargement". Confronted by the power of norm based arguments, the West talked itself into a commitment to admit countries that shared its liberal values, and in turn, this 'rhetorical entrapment' as they call it, has subsequently sustained enlargement despite the fact that a mere association for eastern Europe would have better served the EU's interests (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005:204). As such, idealism played a part in the decision to enlarge.

The ten new member states, along with Romania and Bulgaria, are highly diverse. They are also numerous. Were they to join forces, they could in theory collectively block unanimous votes, such as those on budgetary matters. Additionally, they have the capacity to block votes by qualified majority (108 out of 345 = 31 %). This reflects the radical over-representation of smaller states in the EU system, although this would change were the Constitution to be ratified (ibid: 207). Yet, as Moravcsik and Vachudova (2005:199) argue, as new members become absorbed into the EU decision making process, they are more likely to do "little more than reinforce existing trends in EU politics".

Following the concerns over the relatively poorer states' accessions, incumbent member states were allowed to introduce restrictions on workers from candidate countries having access to their labour markets for up to seven years, which most, only Sweden, Ireland and the UK opened their markets right from the start, took advantage of. To reduce the strain on the budget, it was agreed to phase in

agricultural subsidies over a period of nine years before farmers in the candidate countries could enjoy the same levels of direct payments (Szczerbiak & Taggart 2005:3). Yet, perhaps the most controversial issue of the accession of the eastern states was the free mobility of persons. Fears of large inflows of immigrants have been prominent throughout the member states (de Melo et al 2004:159). Thus, in the final round of the negotiations, the EU imposed some conditions based on narrow self-interest. After adopting EU standards and rules, the accession states were forced to accept unfavourable terms for their accession. They received lower, albeit still substantial, subsidies from the CAP and from the Structural and Cohesive funds than did previous poorer applicants. Money transferred from the EU budget to new members has been capped at 4 per cent of their GDP, an amount far lower than what their predecessors obtained. This effectively limits their receipts and protects those of the richer members. To the accession states, these terms are unfavourable, but according to bargaining logics, the picture is more nuanced. The applicants agree to these concessions precisely because the basic benefit offered to them, that of membership, is of such great value, which in turn outweighs the costs, particularly if compared to exclusion (Schimmelfennig and Vachudova 2005:203). This fits with the logic of 'asymmetrical interdependence'. In a basic bargaining theory perspective, relative bargaining power in international negotiations tends to track relative preference intensity (ibid: 199). The logic that follows is that those countries to which cooperation is most attractive as opposed to unilateral policy making will be more positive towards agreement and also more willing to compromise on the margin to further such an agreement (ibid). The applicant countries as well as the member states benefit from enlargement, although the new applicants benefit more. The asymmetry of interdependence, and in turn power, is clearly illustrated by the collective GDP of the states who joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, who collectively account for no more than 5 per cent of the GDP of the EU 15, which is less than any other enlargement of the EU (ibid:201).

Moravcsik and Vachudova argue that it is not the increase in the number of member states per se that is the issue, but rather the diversity of interest between them

(2005:207). The constraint on EU legislation stems instead from the level of conflict of interest among blocks of states. Therefore, the potential threat to effective decision making would come from the increasing diversity of member states' interests, and even potential divergent preferences within such blocks (ibid). The concern that the increase in member states and the greater diversity of their views will cause a breakdown or gridlock of the decision making process is debatable. The more likely response is an increase in qualified majority voting (ibid). Moravcsik and Vachudova (2005:208) point to three potential reasons why this enlargement is unlikely to cause gridlock; firstly that the new members are not "that unruly". They join existing coalitions, which will mean that some of these will inevitably be strengthened, however they shall not cause a halt in the decision making process. Secondly, even without enlargement, the EU would not be in a dynamic mood. Even the core members have no consensual 'grand project' for European integration. EU governments are instead prioritising policy areas outside of the first pillar, such as foreign and monetary policies. Lastly, it is argued that it is precisely within these areas of interest outside of the first pillar that flexible institutional mechanisms are needed, and so the trend is toward differentiation, multitrack structures and ad hoc arrangements (ibid).

The fifth wave of enlargement, giving accession to many eastern European states has, despite the successful integration of these states into the EU, become synonymous with fears over migration throughout Europe, which in turn arguably fuelled further fears over the proposed 2007 enlargements. The 2004 expansion, despite its positive review post enlargement, caused controversy and introduced the debate over absorption capacity that has been prominent in EU discourse ever since.

3.2 Most Recent Enlargements of 2007: Bulgaria and Romania

Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU as its 26th and 27th members on the first of January 2007. They first applied for membership in 1995, and both countries started

their accession negotiations in February 2000. These were successfully concluded in December 2004, with the accession treaty being signed in April the following year (European Commission 2006d). According to the most recent monitoring report on Bulgaria and Romania of 26 September 2006, the Commission now acknowledges the readiness of both countries as satisfactory in handling the obligations EU membership carries. In order to address the, albeit limited, areas where further measurements are needed, the EU has adopted a package of accompanying steps of action.

Bulgaria and Romania have a combined population of over 30 million people. Their entries were conditional on particular reforms being met in order to be allowed into the EU. There are major concerns over the accession of these states, both from within the general public and member states themselves. The EU will keep certain policy areas under surveillance, and have threatened these accession countries with economic sanctions should they take such decisions into their own hands. The EU will impose harsh penalties if the required reforms are not met within the tight schedule set for them. These reforms include tackling corruption and organised crime which have been prevalent in the old communist countries. The president of the Commission, José Barroso, has said there will be a halt in enlargement after the entry of Bulgaria and Romania, as this marks the last phase of integration in an EU that has been “stretched beyond capacity for now (...) We are not in position to further integrate Europe without further institutional reform. There are limits to our absorption capacity” (Bilefsky 2006). There were discussions within the EU over whether one should allow Bulgaria and Romania entry now, or to wait until January 2008. The Commission however, feared setbacks in the reform processes in the two countries, should it delay their entry for another year (Aftenposten 2006a). Following this logic, the EU thought it preferable to include them sooner rather than later.

The main concerns of the EU in regard to Bulgaria and Romania are fivefold. Firstly, the fight against corruption in these countries causes much concern. According to Transparency International; Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Turkey all have more

widespread corruption than the 10 new members did before joining in 2004 (International Herald Tribune 2006). Secondly, there are doubts over the capability these countries have in handling the money transfers from the CAP and structural funds which the EU operates. Thirdly, there is scepticism over their ability to deal with issues of food safety, and in order to combat this, the EU will monitor food safety programmes. Additionally, the states' efforts at preventing human trafficking will be followed closely (Aftenposten 2006a). Reforms of their judicial systems are also considered necessary. The fifth and perhaps most pronounced concern of the current EU member states relates to the potential increase in the immigration of workers from the new accession countries, which may cause both economic and social tensions. Whether these concerns are real or not remains to be seen. In sharp contrast to the open door policy which followed from the 2004 enlargement in the UK as a result of the Home Office's prediction that numbers entering from the new member states would be low, the UK has now pronounced strict restrictions, or 'closed doors', on immigration from Bulgaria and Romania. This has occurred despite the fact that the migration of workers from the 2004 countries has proved to have helped strengthen the British economy, filling low paid jobs that were otherwise unoccupied. The British position again illustrates the sense of enlargement fatigue. Despite the many advantages which have followed the enlargement to 25 member states with 470 million citizens, weariness and scepticism reign, both at citizen and state level.

With the recent enlargement, another two eastern, post communist states have entered the EU. Potential problems remain, but there seems to be a preference for dealing with such problems from the inside, rather than having potential threats on the outside of the EU. Strategic security considerations may also have been important as a driving force for these countries' membership. Romania has, for instance, been considered a valuable strategic partner, due to its participation in KFOR, Partnership for Peace and other regional projects promoting stability in South-East Europe.

3.3 Further possible Expansion: the Case of Turkey

The question of Turkish accession to the EU epitomises the discussion of absorption capacity prevalent in present EU discourse. The stability of the European continent has been seen as the main aim as well as the greatest achievement of the Union. The potential inclusion of Turkey can thus be seen as a continuation of this logic, as a part of the scheme of fighting instability in Europe's outskirts, as well as an attempt to bridge the east and west of Europe. Turkey represents a diametrically different state, in religious, social, and economic terms, to those of the existing EU (Ask 2006), all of which contribute to the heated discussion regarding Turkish membership.

Turkey was first officially recognised as a candidate for membership of the EU in 1999, and as a result a pre-accession strategy was prepared in 2001. The process however, started four decades prior to this, with the Ankara Association Agreement signed in 1963 (Avcı 2006:62). The long time span between these events reflects the uncertainties and the concerns regarding the question of whether Turkey will, or should, join the EU. After the eastern enlargements of 2004, questions over Turkey's accession to the EU intensified. Already in October the same year, the Commission announced that Turkey adequately fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria, and recommended negotiations should start. As a result, the accession negotiations started on the 3rd of October 2005.

Turkish candidacy for EU membership remains a major and problematic challenge (Avcı 2006:62). It would be a costly addition for economic as well as geopolitical reasons (ibid). Identity issues have also proved to be an important concern; with Turkey being viewed as too different from what is regarded "European". Turkey's status in relation to the EU was always pronounced in more vague terms, compared with the CEECs. To illustrate, in the 2004 enlargement phrases like "re-uniting Europe", "a political imperative", "something that had to be done", "Europe's 'other half finally coming home'", and "not united but reunited" were used (European Council 1993, Lundgren 2006:134, Sjursen 2006b:138). Conversely, in talks of Turkey an 'us versus them' mentality has been prominent. Enlargement to Turkey

was never considered a “duty”, nor a “responsibility” (Lundgren 2006:136). In stark contrast, Turkey was considered more of a “bridge” between Europe and Asia. Herein lays the fundamental question that concerns both the EU and its citizens; is Turkey “European”? In Leon Brittan’s (1994 in Lundgren 2006:136) words; “in an increasingly interdependent world, Turkey draws increasing strength from its position as a bridge between developed and developing neighbours, a bridge between Asia and Europe, a bridge between the religions of Islam and Western Europe”. Former Commissioner Hans van den Broek (1994 in Lundgren 2006:136) states that “Turkey’s Islamic culture is an asset in a continent which has always sought unity in diversity and which wishes to improve relations with the Muslim world”.

There are however, also perceived advantages which would come with Turkish accession; and particularly geopolitical and strategic factors would recommend Turkish integration into the European family (Lundgren 2006:131). Its unique position at the crossroads of the Balkans is crucial (Rehn 2004). Of potential importance for the security of Europe is Turkey’s energy supplies and its political, economic and military weight (*ibid*). Turkey has been a loyal NATO ally since 1952, however, “the creation of political, economic and social stability on the European continent seems more relevant than security defined in its narrow sense with a focus on geo-strategic and military issues” (Lundgren 2006:131).

The obstacles relating to Turkish accession have been more prominent in EU discussions than the perceived advantages following from a potential accession. Many regard the Turkish question as a key part of the absorption capacity discussion. Firstly, there are concerns of economic character. These have to do with major structural disparities in both agriculture and industry, macroeconomic imbalances, ineffective fiscal transfers, high levels of industrial protectionism as well as the low level of social protection more generally (*ibid*:129).

Secondly, and perhaps more prominent are the cultural factors. There are concerns that the entry of Turkey into the EU would cause the loss of Europe’s identity. This is echoed for instance in utterances like Helmut Kohl’s “a Muslim country like Turkey

does not belong in Europe”, and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s statement that the entry of Turkey “would be the end of Europe” (BBC News 2002). This suggests a vision of the EU as one of sharing set cultural values that are of non-universal qualities (Lundgren 2006:121), contrasting with a rights-based understanding of the EU, where eligibility is grounded on common universal values such as democracy, liberty, the rule of law and human rights. This latter understanding thus suggests a much wider membership base for the EU.

Thirdly, Turkey’s size and relative poverty exacerbate the problem (Economist 2005). Fears arise over whether, if accession will be granted, Turkey would automatically gain a considerable weight in decision making, due to its population size, and also whether Turkey may engage in coalitions with other “eastern” members, providing a significant voting bloc. The size of the country also inevitably leads to concerns over immigration, most notably the cost of policing this, and the social and economic effect this will have on ‘core Europe’.

Fourthly, there are international concerns over issues of human rights in Turkey. There is the question of the Armenian genocide and Turkey’s refusal to acknowledge its past, which is usually mentioned in conjunction with accusations about Turkey’s record of human rights (Sunday Herald 2005). The French Parliament has taken a particular interest in the Armenian case, approving a bill making it a crime to deny that Ottoman Turks perpetrated genocide against the Armenian people in the years 1915-1917. It follows from this, that should Turkey want to join the Union, it will have to acknowledge its genocidal past. Whether this is merely a provocation or a tactical move to further delay Turkish accession is debatable.

Lastly, there are concerns over Turkey’s refusal to acknowledge Cyprus’s sovereignty. The Enlargement Commissioner Rehn warned that failing to make concessions over Cyprus could harm Turkey’s chances for membership. There are now ongoing negotiations led by Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja with the aim of convincing Ankara to open its ports to Greek Cypriot ships, this in exchange for lifting an EU trade embargo on Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus (BBC News

2006). The fact that ethnic conflicts and nationalistic movements could have a potential spillover effect into the EU cause major concern (Lundgren 2006:132), particularly regarding the recognition of a Kurdish homeland and the case of Cyprus.

Even if EU relations with Turkey date back to the early days of the European project, the question of Turkish EU membership has been long debated and the country's place in Europe remains contested (ibid:121). The potential accession of Turkey would suggest an EU based upon criteria of rights rather than culture (Avci 2006:63). Lundgren (2006) has compared Romania and Turkey in regards to EU membership, and she argues that Turkey scored higher than Romania on both democratic and economic indicators prior to the EU's decision to enlarge eastward in 1993. It follows that the enlargements the EU makes cannot merely be interpreted with reference to utility calculations or concerns for human rights and democracy. As from a utility perspective, we would assume that one wanted the accession of candidates of which potential economic or security gains were considered to be particularly high. On the other hand, a rights-based perspective would focus more on the candidate's concern for human rights and democracy. Neither criterion seems to fully explain the reason why the EU has enlarged to the CEEC but not included Turkey. This may have something to do with a kinship-based duty, Lundgren (2006:122) suggests. In this sense, concerns rage over the possible dilution of the current level of integration and import of possible political instability into the 'core' Europe (Pridham 2006:399). This reflects the wider worry about the cultural compatibility of Turkey vs 'Europe' (Kaiser and Elvert 2004:1).

3.4 The Emergence of the Absorption Capacity Problem

This wave of enlargements and the prospect of the future accession of Turkey led to the introduction of the absorption capacity issue in the EU. Like other rounds of enlargements, expansion to the east was seen as profitable because it was considered to bring stable, long-term economic and geopolitical benefits. Yet, the costs and benefits of enlargement are often unevenly distributed, which may explain parts of

the politics that has surrounded it (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005:198). The benefits of these enlargements were often seen in a long term perspective, whereas the costs were viewed as a short term effect, contributing to the apprehension surrounding them.

The very essence of enlargement came to be contested, for three reasons. Firstly, the decline in support for enlargement among EU voters caused concern. Opinion polls still show a narrow majority in favour of enlargement, yet in some countries the mood turned sharply against further expansion. Enlargement Commissioner Rehn has complained that the various national governments make little effort to paint out the advantages which follow from enlargement. Secondly, and at least partly in response to the 2004 expansion, EU governments have lost enthusiasm for enlargement, particularly in countries such as France, Germany, and Austria. Lastly, the failure to ratify the constitutional treaty in 2006 was interpreted as a negative reaction to contemporary enlargement. The lack of an institutional settlement may also prove a bar to enlargement. The Nice treaty provided votes and parliamentary seats for Romania and Bulgaria, but not for Croatia, which is the next country in line.

There were a number of extensive challenges and risks which the 2004 enlargement posed that may have led to the occurrence of the absorption capacity discussion. Following the 2004 entry of the CEECs, concerns over the growing economic, institutional, cultural, as well as linguistic heterogeneity of the EU have been increasingly prominent in EU discussions. The 2004 enlargement represented an unprecedented challenge for the EU in dealing with the sheer number of the candidate countries, the diversity they represented and particularly the structural and financial consequences their admittance to the EU would have (Esposito 1999:97). Most prominent were concerns regarding the lack of a European collective identity (Scharpf 1999:187). The relatively poorer economic conditions of the newer member states, it has been suggested, require substantial reforms, and subsequent changes to key common policies such as the common agricultural policy and the structural funds. The achievement of consensus decision making proves more difficult with a

substantially wider member base, and there are concerns that this could potentially lead to a weakened EU if no adequate institutional changes are made (Baun 2000:229).

The problems which the EU now experiences as a result of this can be said to consist of two elements. Firstly, the EU as an institution, or as a collection of institutions, faces more challenges than it has the capacity to deal with in its current state. Secondly, the EU is subject to extensive pressure to solve these problems within a short period of time by transforming its present framework, or at least developing it, and thus avoiding irreversible damage. The perception of a crisis may indicate that the project of eastern enlargement has exceeded the perceived capacity of the EU in its present institutional condition.

There are many challenges posed by the increasing size of the Union in itself, as the existing institutions were by and large designed and established to cater for the original community of six countries, which cause major concern that they will simply fail to work with twenty-seven members (Baldwin 2004:14). The six were also a relatively homogenous community, politically as well as economically. The 2004 enlargement represents significantly different economies and political systems into the EU. Particularly concerning to many is the CAP and structural funds that subsidise infrastructure and capital investment in Europe's poorer regions, which together accounts for some 80% of the Union's budget. An automatic application of these to the newer member states would require a doubling of the EU budget. Some of these institutional issues were looked at in the Amsterdam Treaty, although the reforms proved too difficult to agree upon; creating the so-called "Amsterdam left-overs". There were later attempts to solve this in another IGC, and some reforms were agreed upon in 2000 with the Treaty of Nice. Nevertheless, issues of institutional inadequacy remain unsolved.

The 2004 enlargements also prompted concerns over the depth of the EU, suggesting that there has been only limited transfer of national sovereignty from the member states. Additionally, the enlargements led to concerns over "hostage taking" in the

decision making process, due to the unanimity rule and the veto opportunities of the newer, smaller countries. More compromise solutions and difficulties in coming to agreements are expected in the future as a consequence of this.

The inadequacy of the EU's political structures (Eichengreen & Frieden 1998:296) has also been pointed to as a consequence of enlargement. Even if the EEA introduced majority voting for Single Market topics (Art. 100a), the principle of unanimity (Art. 100) still applies for many decisions. Consensus through unanimity is still an unwritten rule. There are concerns that the votes granted to small and large countries in the Council (Art. 148 sec 2) and the European Parliament, as well as at the top of the Commission, clearly favour small countries, Eichengreen and Frieden argue. This may impair the position of the larger countries and thus concerns that the new, smaller eastern countries will block decisions appear. The concern is that the larger the EU in terms of number of member states, the smaller the set of arrangements on which they are all willing or able to agree upon, and subsequently that this will increase the dissatisfaction with the system, also for those states which traditionally have favoured more integration (Monitoring European Integration 6 1995:13). A larger degree of flexibility in the system will be necessary to allow for alternatives in an increasingly less homogeneous EU, but then on the other hand, increased flexibility will thus also be considered problematic as it may undermine the gains already achieved in the EU.

The Council of Ministers was substantially expanded by the 2004 and 2007 entrants. There is expected to be an increase in the time consumed by every country expressing their views, and the need for translations will increase. The 2004 enlargement also substantially increased the number of poorer member states (Deubner 1999:122), causing concerns that their cumulative weight may lead them to exercise more power by increasing their voting weight and gaining blocking minority. Reforms of voting procedures have been muted, most notably the Herman model (ibid) of double majority voting. This requires a majority of both the population of the EU plus a majority of the qualified majority votes of the Member States, but the coalition of

the poor, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, would still gain power quickly. This might motivate the states to choose the least controversial reform, namely to assess the requirement of total populations' majority to that of the present qualified weighted majority of states, for a qualified majority to come about in the Council.

The purpose of looking at the history of European enlargement follows the logic that the prevailing uncertainty over the political essence and meaning of the EU that colours the EU discourse today is comparable to that of the past. EU enlargement is more of the rule than an exception, having been a natural part of the Union's agenda since the very start. Now that the EU has grown to comprise 27 members, it is said to be the "most successful example of peaceful regime change in our time (...) The advance toward liberal democracy has gone hand in hand with their advance towards membership of what is now the European Union" (Ash 2007a). The additions up to 2004 went relatively smoothly, not causing much controversy in comparison to the enlargement of 2004, nor did they lead to discussions of absorption capacity. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in January 2007 and there are hopes that negotiations with Turkey will stimulate further reforms in the country, and thus lead Turkey closer to potential accession. The EU has also acknowledged the future potential membership perspective of the countries of the western Balkans. The Commission has "issued a positive opinion on Croatia's application" (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005:3). The decision to open negotiations with Croatia has been welcomed, as has the decision to grant the former Yugoslav country Macedonia status as a candidate country (Committee on Foreign Affairs 2006). At the Thessaloniki summit of 2003, the other countries of the Western Balkans were given a European "perspective". Albania is close to finalising negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and the Council has decided to start similar negotiations with Bosnia-Herzegovina (ibid).

It is therefore apparent that the sense of enlargement fatigue currently facing the EU is not a singular event, the history of enlargement has shown that when enlargement is introduced, scepticism has, more often than not, followed. Yet, following the

argument in chapter two, despite scepticism, absorption capacity only entered the discourse after the major eastern enlargement of 2004.

4. Handling the problem of Absorption Capacity – Clarification and Definition

Within the previous chapters, it has been argued that absorption capacity is a product of the enlargement related problems that the EU has faced. This however, was not a prominent concept in EU discourse prior to 2003; but has become increasingly important in present EU discussions. Following concerns that absorption capacity was too vague a concept to be of any use, the EU has now taken a more structured approach; and both the Commission and the European Parliament have published reports where they seek to clarify and define the term, point to where solutions are needed and suggest measures to do this. The media has also taken an interest in the debate over absorption capacity, and as such, their approach to the subject is of importance in how absorption is portrayed and the actual consequences it has for Europe in terms of the public reaction to this. In this chapter, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the media's approaches towards absorption capacity will be discussed, followed by a conceptualisation of absorption capacity with a particular focus on legitimacy and effectiveness. The next chapter will offer an empirical discussion of the term, tentatively investigating the actual level of absorption capacity in the EU. At the heart of both approaches to absorption capacity lie the issues of legitimacy and effectiveness and these shall be discussed in due turn.

The European Commission released its Enlargement Strategy report on 8 November 2006, describing the remaining challenges related to enlargement and pointing to the most important aspects that need to be dealt with. Compared with the European Parliament's resolution, the Commission's strategy seems less specific and vaguer throughout, whereas the Parliament's resolution is more definite suggesting a number of particular measures to conquer the problem of absorption capacity. In discussing the perspective taken by the media, the focus will be on *the Economist* articles as these provide a particularly clear and definite response to the concerns of absorption capacity. These have also been the only ones I have found that have focused

particularly on the term absorption capacity, and not only enlargement fatigue in a more general manner.

Throughout this thesis, the term “absorption” capacity has been used as was introduced in the Copenhagen criteria. Yet, as best explained in the Parliament’s resolution, but which is also mentioned in the Commission’s report, there seems to be a new consensus “*that the term ‘absorption capacity’ does not suitably convey the idea which it aims to express, inasmuch as the EU does not in any way absorb its members, and therefore proposes that this expression be changed to “integration capacity”, which better reflects the character of EU membership*” (European Parliament 2006:3). This change in language will be discussed in the following.

4.1 The Commission’s Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007¹⁰ report

Following from the increased usage of the term over the last couple of years, a calling for a clarification of absorption capacity prevailed in EU circles; and resulting from this the Commission published a report on 8 November 2006 where attempts to tackle questions of absorption capacity were presented. The report states that absorption capacity should be understood as an attempt to measure the EU’s, as well as the existing members’, readiness to accede new members (European Commission 2006c).

The report uses the term *integration* capacity rather than *absorption* capacity, and defines it as dealing with the issue of whether the EU can take in new members at a given moment or in a given period, without jeopardising the political and policy objectives established by the Treaties (ibid), as such, stating that integration capacity is first and foremost a functional concept. The 1993 Copenhagen European Council

¹⁰ COM (2006)649 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council; Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007 Including annexed special report on the EU’s capacity to integrate new members.

concluded that “the EU’s capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries”. The report by the Commission, following the line set out in the Commission’s 2005 Strategy Paper and confirmed by the June 2006 European Council, states that the pace of enlargement must take into consideration the EU’s *integration capacity* (emphasis added) (ibid). It further declares that “the EU’s absorption capacity, or *rather* integration capacity, is determined by the development of the EU’s policies and institutions (...)” (emphasis added) (ibid: 17). The *rather* here seems to imply that integration capacity is regarded as a more favourable term than absorption capacity. Absorption capacity, as stated, follows from the language used in the Copenhagen Criteria as of 1993.

Is this diversion from ‘absorption’ simply a semantic one? Or is it an attempt to widen the phrase and dilute any negative connotations related to the ‘absorption’ part? This illustrates the difficulties inherent in defining such a concept, and the usage as such of absorption capacity within an EU context. The attempt to shift the focus from the term ‘absorption’ is perhaps the result of a preference to move away from an emotionally charged term. In this respect, integration capacity can be seen as an attempt to soften the negative connotations associated with absorption capacity, used particularly by forces opposed to further enlargement. In this sense, it may be suggested that *absorption* capacity may have become incompatible with a positive outlook towards enlargement.

The report points to the advantages of enlargement so far, showing an enduring value as “one of the EU’s most effective policies, successfully contributing to peace, stability and democratic development throughout the continent” (ibid). The integration of the 2004 countries has been successful and the EU’s institutions have continued to function effectively. There have been clear economic benefits, such as the rapid “catching up” of the new member states. The old member states have benefited from new trade and investment opportunities. The adoption of the euro by the new member states, which started with Slovenia on 1 January 2007, has been

progressive, further contributing to this positive trend. The latest enlargements have as such acted as a catalyst for economic growth and modernisation in the EU (ibid: 4). More concrete benefits are seen in the three member states Ireland, Sweden, and the UK, which introduced the free movement of labour upon the accession of the ten new member states, in terms of increased national income and tax revenues and shrinkage of the grey economy. Workers from new member states have helped overcome skills shortages in the labour market and have adapted well to their new cultural environment. Following from these positive experiences, another five states have opened their labour markets and two others have partially opened them¹¹. Overall, the fifth enlargement has been a considerable success. Over 100 million new EU citizens, with rising incomes, will help to drive the European economy forward. Enlargement has brought higher standards of democracy and the rule of law in Europe (ibid: 5).

4.1.1 The Commission's proposed measures

The Commission's report introduces an approach to how the EU ensures its *capacity to maintain the momentum* of European integration while enlargement continues (emphasis added) (ibid: 20). This capacity has three main components; the EU's institutions, its common policies, and the budget. Overall, the EU needs to ensure that its institutions continue to act effectively, that its policies meet their goals, and that its budget is commensurate with its objectives and with its financial resources also following enlargements (ibid).

Firstly, the report states that the EU does not need new institutional arrangements simply for the sake of enlargement; but that it needs them to ensure that the current EU can function better. In particular, decision making needs to remain both effective and accountable. In previous enlargements, the integration of the acceding countries into the institutions formed part of the accession negotiations. The resulting

¹¹ Full opening May 2006: Spain, Greece, Finland, Portugal, July 2006: Italy. Partial opening: Belgium, France.

adjustments to the institutional provisions were made in the respective Accession Treaties. In the latest wave of enlargement, the 2004 and 2007 countries were preceded by institutional reforms based on the Nice Treaty (ibid: 20). This treaty provided for up to 27 states, which included Bulgaria and Romania, but stipulated that when the EU consists of 27 member states, the number of members of the Commission shall be less than the number of the member states. Further, the number of members of the Commission is to be set by the Council, acting unanimously (ibid). The Treaty of Nice did not make provisions for further adaptations to the composition and functioning of the EU institutions after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. The allocation of seats in the European Parliament and the weighing of votes in the Council are clearly central to the EU's capacity to take decisions and therefore, before any further enlargement, the EU will have to decide on the scope and substance of those institutional reforms (ibid:21). Of a more practical character and relating to the functioning of the institutions is the use of languages, which will have particular implications. A new institutional settlement should be reached by the time the next new member is likely to be ready to join the EU, which would be Croatia (ibid).

Secondly, EU policies are of importance regards the capacity to integrate or absorb new members, which also affects the effectiveness of the EU. "The Union needs to continue developing and implementing common policies in all areas as it enlarges, and assessment of the impact of enlargement on EU policies will take place at all key stages of the enlargement process"(ibid). In the future, the opinions of the Commission on each country's application will include an assessment of the impact of that accession on EU policies, the report states.

Thirdly, the budget is of increased importance. The EU needs to be in a position where it can continue to finance its policies in a sustainable manner. The impact of enlargement on the EU budget will be "carefully assessed", and each Commission opinion on a country's application for EU membership will "provide estimates of budgetary impact" (ibid: 22). The report further states that before any future

accession, the EU “will need to decide on the overall budgetary means required”, and the Commission will propose a package of necessary financial measures (ibid). Regards accession negotiations, the Commission will provide substantial assessments of the impact of accession on key policy areas, such as the movement of persons, border management, agriculture, and cohesion policy (ibid:21).

The report states that the EU enlargement policy is based on three principles; consolidation of commitments, conditionality and communication. Consolidation stresses the cautiousness of the EU in assuming any new commitments, at the same time honouring its existing commitments toward countries already in the enlargement process (European Commission 2006c:5). “Rigorous but fair conditionality is applied to all candidate and potential candidate countries, and steps forward will depend on each country’s own progress in meeting the necessary conditions at each stage of the accession process, helping to consolidate reforms and prepare new member states to fulfil their obligations upon accession”(ibid). Emphasising legitimacy considerations, the report states that “for enlargement to be a success, the EU must ensure the *support of its citizens*” (emphasis added) (ibid), as member states need to take the lead in communicating effectively the benefits that enlargement offers to EU citizens.

Ensuring that the candidate countries fulfil the rigorous conditions is of importance. High-quality preparation by candidate countries facilitates their smooth integration into the EU (ibid: 22). As part of the pre-accession strategy, the Commission will closely monitor the progress made by each enlargement state, which in turn will be based on political, economic, and *acquis* criteria for membership. Based on these findings, the Commission will propose short and medium term reform priorities for the Accession or European Partnerships covering each country. 2007 will also see the introduction of a single new financial instrument to cover all pre-accession needs, which in turn will make EU support for membership preparations more effective; the Instrument of Pre-Accession (ibid). In the future, there will be a closer link between progress in political reforms and the overall pace of the negotiations. Prior to accession, it is important that the candidate country is a functioning market economy

able to compete in the internal market, which will be the target of pre-accession assistance. Institutional reform is needed to improve the effectiveness of the decision-making of the enlarged EU, in order to ensure it can maintain its capacity to act and decide according to its institutions, respect its budgetary limits, and implement ambitious common policies that function well and achieve their objectives (ibid).

The use of benchmarks is suggested in the report. During negotiations of accession questions, the candidate country commit to applying the entire body of EU legislation and policies, known as the *acquis*. They will then have to accept and implement the *acquis*, and adhere to the political objectives of the Treaties (ibid: 6). Benchmarks are introduced here as a result of lessons learnt from the fifth enlargement; and the purpose is to improve the quality of the negotiations, by providing incentives for the candidate country to undertake necessary reforms at an early stage. Together with the negotiation framework, the establishment of benchmarks in opening or closing negotiation chapters will ensure a rigorous approach to accession negotiations.

The report also stresses the supporting of increased transparency, recommending screening reports, benchmarking for opening negotiation chapters as well as the final EU common positions to be made public; in general an expanding of its support for civil society dialogue. It suggests an introduction of more “people-to-people” contacts in areas of education, research, and culture, and the continuation of monitoring public opinion on enlargement and as such listening to the concerns of the public. For this, developing user-friendly information in everyday language will be crucial (ibid: 10).

4.1.2 The Commission’s Conclusions

In preparing previous enlargements, the Commission has examined, in separate policy papers, the implications for the EU of issues common to several applications for membership. The focus has mainly been on strengthening EU institutions, furthering economic integration and developing common policies as pre-requisites for enlargement (ibid: 19).

Democratic legitimacy is paramount in the EU enlargement process. The decision leading to a state's accession is taken unanimously by the democratically elected governments of the member states and candidate countries, and national parliaments ratify the decision. The European Parliament, whose members are directly elected, gives its assent (ibid: 23). Furthermore, for any policy including enlargement, the EU has to win the support of its citizens. Therefore, it needs to communicate better the advantages, as well as the challenges, of enlargement. The Commission aims for improving the availability of factual information in user-friendly form. Better transparency will bring the enlargement process closer to the citizens (ibid: 24).

The conclusions from the report include firstly that the general enlargement policy of the EU continues to be based on the three principles of consolidation, conditionality, and communication (European Commission 2006c:15). The EU's capacity to integrate new members is determined by two factors. Firstly, the maintenance of the "momentum to reinforce and deepen European integration by ensuring the EU's capacity to function" is crucial. Secondly, the ensuring that "the candidate countries are ready to take on the obligations of membership when they join by fulfilling the rigorous conditions set" is important, which is assessed by the Commission on the basis of strict conditionality (ibid). The report aims to reinforce the democratic basis for the enlargement process; in the interest of all stakeholders to avoid a gap between policy makers on one side, that is, how effective they are, and the public on the other side, that is, how legitimate enlargement is seen as being (ibid:24).

At the present, it seems unlikely that any "large group of countries will in the future accede simultaneously" (ibid: 18). The European public needs to be ready for further enlargement, with a better understanding of the issues at stake. This will enhance the democratic legitimacy of the process in terms of public perception; and as such, the approach presented in the Commission's paper is based on the foundation of ensuring the EU's capacity to maintain the momentum of European integration and at the same time making sure that candidate countries fulfil the rigorous conditions (ibid).

The Commission's report seems to put more focus on the effectiveness rather than legitimacy of the EU as factors important regarding absorption capacity. The four main measures of new institutional arrangements, the continuation of implementing EU policies, the increased importance of the budget and the introduction of benchmarks point to this. There is limited attention on issues of legitimacy, even given that the improvement of the transparency of the Union is mentioned.

4.2 The Parliament's Resolution on the Institutional aspects of the EU's capacity to integrate new member states¹²

This resolution presents the European Parliament's response to calls for a clarification of absorption capacity and was published a month after the Commission's strategy report (December 2006). In its introductory comments, the resolution states that whilst the European Council of June 2005 reaffirmed its commitment to full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda, and that of June 2006 reaffirmed its intention to honour the existing commitments to the South-East European countries concerning enlargement; the Parliament still emphasises the "need to ensure that the Union is able to function politically, economically and institutionally as it enlarges" (European Parliament 2006:1). The resolution of the Parliament is in comparison to the strategy report of the Commission more structured and definite in its proposed measures. The Parliament resolution puts forward 17 specific measures for enhancing the institutional aspects of 'integration' capacity.

The basis for accession to the EU has since 1993 been compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria and should remain so for future accessions. Reinforcing this, the European Council of 15-16 June 2006 decided that "the pace of enlargement must take the Union's *capacity to absorb new members* and *further ways of improving the quality of the enlargement process* on the basis of the positive experiences

¹² 2006/226(INI)

accumulated so far” on the basis of a report “on all relevant aspects pertaining to the Union’s absorption capacity” (emphasis added) (ibid). According to the European Council, the report should also cover the issue of present and future perceptions of enlargement by citizens and should take into account the need to explore the enlargement process adequately to the public (ibid).

The resolution points to the importance of preserving the effectiveness of the EU decision making, and that “although every enlargement of the Union has brought about changes in its institutional, political, and financial framework” (ibid), such changes have not been sufficient. The Parliament considers that the notion of absorption capacity implies that after enlargement, European institutions will be able to function properly and take effective decisions in a democratic manner in accordance with their specific procedures. Secondly, it argues that the financial resources of the EU will be sufficient to adequately finance its activities, and thirdly that the Union will be able to successfully develop its policies and attain its goals, in order to pursue its political project.

In order to ensure its integration capacity, the Union must decide on the scope and substance of the reforms that it needs to achieve before any future accession takes place; its evaluation in this regard must be conducted throughout the key stages of the enlargement process, taking into account the possible impact that new Member States will have on its institutional, financial and decisional capabilities.

The resolution finds that absorption capacity does not suitably convey the idea which it aims to express, in as much as the EU does not in any way absorb its members. It therefore proposes that the term is changed to integration capacity, which “better reflects the character of EU membership” (ibid). Despite this change in both the Commission and the Parliament’s usage, I will continue to use the phrase absorption capacity throughout for reasons of clarity and more obviously in that it is the life of this particular term that I am investigating.

4.2.1 The Parliament's proposed measures

The primary focus of the resolution made by the Parliament is on institutional aspects, stressing that before any future enlargement, a reform of the EU is essential to enable it to work more effectively, more transparently and more democratically. In this light, any further expansion will necessitate the suggested institutional reforms.

The Parliament also put emphasis on the financial consequences of enlargement, notably on the budget. The European Council of 16-17 December 2004 in Brussels stated that “accession negotiations yet to be opened with candidates whose accession could have substantial *financial consequences* can only be concluded after the establishment of the Financial Framework for the period from 2014 together with possible consequential financial reforms” (ibid).

The implementation of policies is related to effectiveness in the EU's absorption capacity, as the notion of integration capacity entails the challenge of adapting the EU to accommodate its new Members. According to the resolution, that “challenge currently remains unresolved, in particular following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands as this treaty would enable the EU to function efficiently and democratically with the challenge of the financial resources still to be tackled”(ibid).

The Parliament's resolution states that any further enlargement will necessitate several reforms, and suggests in the resolution 17 particular institutional measures, which in turn will increase the absorption capacity of the Union. The most important of these in my view include the adoption of a new system of qualified majority voting (QMV), which will enhance the ability of the Council to reach decisions. Related to this is the proposed extension of the matters to which QMV applies. Further, an extension of the participation of the European Parliament on equal footing with the Council in budgetary and legislative matters is suggested. Following from the increased number of member states, a modification of the rota system of the Presidencies of the European Council and the Council is proposed. Additionally, a

creation of the post of a Minister of Foreign Affairs is debated. As noted by the Commission, there are calls for further modification of the composition of the Commission beyond that ordained by the Treaty of Nice; these suggest strengthening the role of the President of the Commission and the reinforcement of his democratic legitimacy through election by the European Parliament.

The establishment of mechanisms for the involvement of national parliaments in the scrutiny of the Union's actions is also proposed, as is modification of the procedure for amendment of the Treaties in order to simplify it, and render it more effective. This would also enhance the EU's democratic character and transparency. It is further suggested an adoption of a clause enabling Member States to withdraw from the Union.

Furthermore, the resolution presents five "other" (ibid) aspects to improve the Union's absorption capacity apart from the necessary institutional reforms. Further enlargements will necessitate modifications in other important aspects of its structure, such as the adoption of a Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and improvement of the solidarity policies between the member states. The revision of its financial framework and a redefinition of several of its policies are also necessary in order to enable the Union to implement the Lisbon Strategy. Further, a reinforcement of the European Neighbourhood Policy is suggested, which is the proposed instrument for establishing mutually beneficial relationships with those European countries that have no immediate prospect for accession, either because they do not fulfil the conditions for membership or because they choose not to join.

Secondly, the resolution accentuates that the above reforms should go alongside efforts to increase public acceptance of enlargement and as such recall the responsibility of Europe's political leaders in explaining to the public the goals and mutual advantages of enlargement. This mirrors what was said by the Commission's strategy report.

Thirdly, the Parliament reiterates that any decision to admit a new Member State should be taken through a procedure that includes numerous safeguards, namely a unanimous decision by all member states on the opening and closing of accession negotiations, the approval of the European Parliament and the ratification of each Accession Treaty by all member states. Again, as emphasised in the paper by the Commission, the Parliament stresses the importance of legitimacy safeguards in facilitating further enlargement.

Fourthly, the signing of an Accession Treaty by the member states' governments means that those governments are fully committed to acting accordingly in order to ensure that the process of ratifying that Treaty is brought to a successful conclusion. Lastly, the resolution points to the fact that the assent of the Parliament, required for the Council to act under Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union on the accession of new Member States, should still apply to the decision to open negotiations.

4.2.2 Conclusions of the resolution

The Parliament reaffirms its commitment to enlargement as an historic opportunity to ensure peace, security, stability, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as economic growth and prosperity in Europe. The resolution further stresses that the EU must be able to adapt its institutional, financial and political structure in due time, in order to avoid causing unexpected delays in the accession of candidate countries once it is established that they satisfy all the conditions for membership.

In a similar vein to the Commission's report, the Parliament states that the Treaty of Nice does not provide an adequate basis for further enlargements. The resolution also endorses its commitment to the Constitutional Treaty, which already offers solutions to most of the reforms needed. It further warns that any attempt to foster a piecemeal implementation of parts of the constitutional package deal may endanger the global compromise upon which it rests.

There is the same set of time constraints noted in both the resolution of the Parliament and in the Commission's report, and the timetable established by the European Council of 15-16 June 2006, which all seek a solution to the constitutional crisis by the second semester of 2008 at the latest, effectively in time for Croatia's potential accession. The resolution reaffirms its commitment to achieving a constitutional settlement for the EU as quickly as possible, and in any case before the citizens of the Union are called upon to cast their votes in the European elections in 2009.

Like the Commission's report, the Parliament's resolution stresses that the concerns over the Union's institutions and enabling them to work more effectively are pivotal. Yet at the same time, the resolution stresses that any measures need be done democratically and with the support of the European citizens. As such, legitimacy and effectiveness go hand in hand, and where the Parliament puts more focus on concerns of legitimacy than the Commission does in their report, measures to combat the Union's effectiveness seem predominant in the response to the concerns over the absorption capacity of the EU.

4.3 Absorption Capacity and the Media

In this section, the media will primarily be represented by articles from *the Economist*. I acknowledge that the selection of sources here ideally should have been broader, but the specific nature of the subject under study seems only discussed by the Economist in depth, more commonly one finds vaguer discussions of enlargement fatigue. As such, the sources used in this section are seen as valid, enabling one to contextualise the concept, as opposed to the more detailed and structured analysis provided by the Commission and the Parliament.

4.3.1 How absorption capacity is defined and understood

The Economist (2006) suggests two ways of understanding absorption capacity. It firstly focuses on *technical consequences*, seeing absorption capacity in a narrower, more technical sense. The attention is on issues such as the budgetary implications following enlargement, and the number of commissioners given that the current Treaty of Nice stated that the size of the Commission would need to be adjusted when the Union would reach 27 members. Secondly, absorption capacity can be understood as *representing societal and popular concerns*, stressing the importance of the general public's support for enlargement to be a success. Following from this, the Economist (2006) warns that absorption capacity may easily be used as a phrase for those who wish to stop the enlargement process, and in particular, those opposed to prevent Turkish accession.

In keeping with the above doubts over absorption capacity, the Economist (2006) argues that the debate over the term misunderstands the nature of the EU. Absorption capacity is fundamentally misleading when applied to an organisation such as the EU because it was originally applied to development economics, and refers to a country's ability to make effective use of external assistance (Economist 2006). This can be exemplified by countries receiving foreign aid, an ability which in turn can be measured to a certain extent. Contrary to this, the absorption capacity of the EU cannot be measured in this way, the Economist (2006) argues. Rather than "absorbing" its members, the EU simply "adds" them, it states. Furthermore, absorption capacity seems unfitting in that it sees the EU as a club with a fixed amount of benefits that get used up when adding new members. Conversely, the Economist argues, "it is more like a network in which the benefits of membership increase as more members join" (ibid).

This seems to fully reject the conception of the EU as a club, and argue instead that the EU is a network. In terms of membership, a club implies limitedness whereas the network implies a more open understanding of this. Yet, as the discussion on enlargement has shown, the EU does not seem to be fully open membership wise, as

is particularly evident in questions of Turkish membership. As such, it is important to acknowledge both the club properties of the EU as well as the network aspects regarding absorption capacity.

4.3.2 Absorption capacity; a problem or a pseudo-problem?

The Economist's focus on absorption capacity suggests that the Union does seem to be suffering from enlargement fatigue, manifesting itself particularly in institutional problems. This does not imply an agreement with the use of absorption capacity; indeed their position on the heuristic merits of the term would seem to mirror that of the Commission and the Parliament, suggesting that the debate concerning absorption capacity is of a pseudo-nature and is better understood as a debate over integration capacity. In this sense, the media has recognised that absorption capacity has come to assume negative connotations, and that this is a potential weakness in the concept and its merits. It shall in the following be discussed how the Economist views institutional aspects as having contributed to the term absorption capacity.

Institutional concerns; the Constitution and QMV

As many as 12 governments promised to put the European constitution to a referendum before ratifying it, including Britain, France, and the Netherlands. "With so many national governments mired in unpopularity and economic troubles, it was scarcely surprising that opinion polls in both countries [France and the Netherlands] started to turn against the Treaty. On May 29th French voters rejected it with 55 to 45 %, and on June 1st Dutch voters turned it down by 62 to 38%" (Economist 2007a). The rejections took Europe by surprise as "it was the first time that two countries had said no simultaneously, the first time any big country had done so, and the first time a founder member had rejected anything" (ibid). A few weeks later an EU summit failed to agree on the budget for 2007-13, and so the sense of crisis was complete.

The Financial Times argues that the Union's supranational institutions, and in particular the Commission, have to fight for their place in the hierarchy of the EU.

The requirement of consensus with 27 member states determines whether effective action can be taken on issues such as energy and foreign policy (Wall 2007). A small degree of absorption capacity in the EU may enhance the danger that consensus could mean the policy of the lowest common denominator. Europe, however, needs to agree on major policies on energy, climate change, poverty, action against crime and terrorism, peacekeeping and a coherent European foreign policy. Some of the actions need to remain in the hands of national governments; others require a common European approach. It is argued that it would be preferable if national governments were to be more positive to the increased use of decision-making based on the principle of QMV, “where the Europe of results requires it” (ibid). Effective decision making with 27 states all with veto power is inherently cumbersome (Economist 2007e). As this would be improved by a settlement on QMV in the Constitution, the importance of an early agreement on the successor to the Constitutional Treaty as a first step in the enunciation of a new vision for Europe is repeatedly stressed.

The story of the constitutional treaty may be tedious, yet relevant to the EU’s sense of current turmoil (Economist 2007a). The process started with the Single European Act in 1986, extending QMV to various policy areas as this seemed to be the only way to push through legislation needed for the 1992 single-market programme. Later, the Maastricht treaty of 1992 promised to create a single currency by 1999, and also set up a common foreign and security policy and new arrangements for co-operating on justice and home affairs (ibid). Amsterdam followed, and subsequently Nice, which left three treaties in the space of eight years. The Laeken summit of 2001 considered what was called the Nice leftovers; simplification, greater transparency, a bigger role for national parliaments, and subsidiarity; ensuring that decisions are taken at the lowest sensible level of government. This summit also summoned a convention for national governments, representatives of EU institutions and the public to discuss the future of Europe, a convention which was led by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. The outcome was the drafting of a full-blown constitution, which was presented to another summit in 2003. In 2004, a text of the constitutional treaty was unanimously agreed on. The Treaty of Nice specified that the Commission to be chosen in 2009

should have fewer commissioners than member countries, and that the Treaty's voting provisions extend only to Romania and Bulgaria. The absence of any new treaty could therefore become a big obstacle to further enlargement (ibid).

Financial concerns: the budget and weak economies

Recent articles of *the Economist* (2007) state that the claims that the EU has been unable to function since the eastern enlargement are overblown (2007c). European enlargement remains on track, despite the continuing concerns over the further expansion to Romania and Bulgaria this year. Over the last few years, there has been agreement on a seven year budget, and there has been set out ambitious plans for an energy policy and for tackling climate change.

There are clear signs that Europe's economies have been underperforming (Economist 2007f), yet there are positive signs emerging. France and Germany's economies are most notably gathering speed, and across Europe the mood is noticeably more optimistic than before. In 2006, the GDP for the EU as a whole grew by 2.9 %. The average unemployment fell to 7.5% (ibid). This optimism follows from a period of profound gloom, in which over the past decade GDP growth has been limited. The overall productivity rates stagnated, and unemployment has historically continued to stay high.

When agreeing upon the financing package for 2007-13 in December 2005, a clause promising a thorough budgetary review in 2008 was included (Economist 2007a). This is now gaining a new significance. The Commission takes the financial consequences seriously. The EU budget, at just over €15 billion, is relatively small, accounting for just one per cent of the Union's GDP. About half of the budget goes to the CAP, and another one-third goes to regional support, in particular on infrastructure spending, although nearly half of that regional money is taken by relatively rich countries. Only a tiny fraction of the budget is spent on projects that might further the Lisbon Agenda's goal of promoting high-tech growth. Since 2003, most farm subsidies have been switched to direct payments, not linked to production

and therefore not trade-distorting (ibid). It is thus argued that “the time is ripe for another attack on the CAP and the way it is financed” (ibid). This offers a different reason for paying attention to the budget review; in that it could become linked to the faith of the constitution, and ultimately the sense of enlargement fatigue pervading the Union.

The discussion of the media’s position on absorption capacity in terms of institutional and financial factors suggests that “the biggest failing of the EU has long been the gulf between the union, as both a project of integration and a set of institutions, and the mass of its citizens” (Economist 2007d). The rejection of the constitution was not only seen as an objection to the text in itself, but was also interpreted as an expression of a more general feeling of resentment towards the European project and its remoteness. The traditional response was to ignore such resentment as the EU was always an elite project; however ignoring people’s views is no longer tenable. Politicians have to be more responsive to voters, the Economist argues (2007), and leaders should spend less time attacking the European institutions and rather extolling the virtues of European enlargement. The spread of referenda may illustrate the need of European citizens to be repeatedly convinced that membership is favourable.

The Economist proposes the following measures (2007d); firstly, the EU needs to show European citizens that the Union works. The area of foreign policy alone should convince more citizens of the benefits of an EU acting together as being able to do more than nation states alone. Secondly, measures to deal with the democratic deficit will be necessary. Eurosceptics make much of the European institutions’ lack of transparency and accountability as well as remoteness from the citizens. The Commission is “far away” from the citizens and unelected. Yet, compared with national governments, the “Brussels machinery is highly transparent and information is always easy to find” (ibid). In relation to accountability, the Commission answers not only to national governments, through the Council, but to the Parliament as well. It is argued that the Parliament has failed in establishing its legitimacy as the natural conduit connecting citizens to the European project. Few citizens know who their

MEP is and turnout at European elections are mostly low, and falling. Campaigns are fought on national, not European issues; and there are no clear signs of a European demos. Thirdly, the Economist states that the EU needs to give Europeans a new dream. The project of peace and prosperity is now taken for granted. For this, concerns for the environment or a more active foreign policy are suggested.

4.4 Inside the core of Absorption Capacity: Legitimacy and Effectiveness

This section will provide a conceptual discussion of absorption capacity, and discuss the way in which issues of legitimacy and effectiveness are inherently important in the concept of absorption capacity. This section will introduce the theoretics behind the concepts of legitimacy and effectiveness in order to better understand the importance of absorption capacity in current EU discourse. I will argue that problems relating to legitimacy and effectiveness in particular have contributed to the sense of enlargement fatigue in the EU, which in turn has introduced absorption capacity into the discussion. Yet, up until now, there seems to have been more weight on legitimacy than on effectiveness in the discourse.

The EU represents a political system which interconnects various member states. Governance within the EU goes hand in hand with discussions of effectiveness. Managing an increasing number of members will depend on the EU's ability to absorb them, which in turn poses serious questions about how effective an enlarged EU can be. The EU is also dependent on support from the governed, and as such, issues of legitimacy are also imperative. The EU is not static, but ever changing; both in geographic terms as well as being subject to major changes in expansion of powers and jurisdiction. This allows for the continual questioning of the authority and accountability (Beetham & Lord 1998:15).

4.4.1 Legitimacy

Legitimacy has been understood in various ways in different settings. Acknowledging its complexity and range of factors, be they rules, normative beliefs, actions, or procedures that contribute to making political authority rightful, is a useful starting point for any analysis of the concept (ibid:5). In relation to EU matters, legitimacy is inevitably discussed in connection to issues of democracy and governance, often leading to debates over the “democratic deficit” of the EU.

The basis for any discussion on the concept of legitimacy should, according to Beetham & Lord (1998:123), be the recognition of the fact that a government is involved in producing rules and regulations, as well as distributing burdens and benefits, all of which for those under its authority. These actions may involve coercion or restrictions on their liberty, as well as the imposition of possible costs; and therefore they require substantial justification. In interpreting legitimacy, three dimensions should be distinguished in order to understand political authority as legitimate (ibid: 3). Firstly, political authority is legitimate when it is acquired and exercised according to established rules. Secondly, legitimacy follows when the said rules are justifiable according to socially accepted beliefs about the rightful source of authority and the proper standards of government and lastly, when positions of authority are confirmed by the consent or affirmation of appropriate subordinates, as well as by recognition of other legitimate authorities. The first concept of legitimacy has a focus on rules and is thus about legality, the second stresses justifications based on beliefs and as such dealing with normative justifiability, and the last one on consent or recognition; legitimation. The respective negative sides to these different concepts of legitimacy are, in the first illegitimacy or breach of the rules, in the second; legitimacy deficit in weak justifications and in the third; contested beliefs and delegitimation or withdrawal of consent or recognition. The EU’s institutions and procedures conform to the criteria of the constitutional rule of law, through a jurisdiction which recognised as binding by the legal systems of the member states (ibid:13).

Social scientists use the term differently from philosophers; as an attempt to analyse and understand the different forms of government and further how political order and also obedience are sustained (Weber 1978:212-215). This view does not so much stress the usage of the term to define or even justify some understood ideal criteria for rightful government. Thus, one can also find that different criteria will help point to or validate various kinds of governments. The degree of legitimacy of which a government depends, will help indicate or even explore the degree of support that said government can call upon (Beetham & Lord 1998:2). Following from this, one could argue that a 'legitimacy deficit' or 'legitimacy crisis' would appear when there is a substantial gap between principles and practise or between legitimising norms and the societal support for them. If this gap is to increase, it may herald political upheaval (Habermas 1976:1-8). This is what seems to have happened with the eastern enlargement, with questions over the legitimacy expanding the cultural and religious basis of the EU being challenged even stronger than before.

The EU is often seen as a problem solving entity where utility refers to an effort to find effective solutions to concrete problems or dilemmas. As such, legitimisation is sought by achieving an output that could be seen as beneficial to given interests and preferences. Values refer to an understanding of the 'good life' grounded in the identity of a specific community. Policy is thus legitimised with reference to what is considered appropriate, given the conception of self in the group. Rights are referring to a set of principles mutually recognised. A policy could be legitimised with reference to principles that would be seen as "just" by all parties, irrespective of their particular interests (Sjursen 2006a:9). In this sense, and as the debate over the eastern enlargement has been heavily concerned with values and identity; this has contributed to the introduction of the term absorption capacity.

As legitimacy has several understandings, there are accordingly different ways in which the term could be operationalised. Since members of pluralist societies argue about the 'right' and the 'good', as well as 'interests' and 'preferences', their institutions often have to accommodate contradictory, yet equally reasonable, ideas of

what is needed for them to be legitimate (Rawls 1993:36). The solutions or propositions one comes to, must work both normatively and institutionally in that they have to be justifiable to those whose values are to be combined, compromised or even over-ruled. Additionally, the solutions will have to be potentially adequately operationalised in their viable institutions (Lord & Magnette 2002:1)

The questioning of legitimacy in the EU

Criticism of the EU is often related to the perceived lack of legitimacy in the Union. After enlargement, this seems more so than ever. It is important to note that enlargement in fact is legitimate, in that every expansion is agreed unanimously upon by all member states and with the assent of the European Parliament (Rehn 2006:5).

Enlargement Commissioner Rehn emphasises the importance of taking into account the concerns of EU citizens with regard to the enlargement process. The Commissioner stresses that the enlargement process must “respect the absorption capacity of the EU and the capacity of the candidates to meet strict conditions” (Rehn 2006:1). Rehn states further that the slow process of political development was fuelled by the disrupted referenda on the Constitutional Treaty (ibid). Members of the European Parliament have argued that the potential deadlock presented with the lack of ratification of a Constitutional Treaty is preventing the EU from increasing its absorption capacity (Committee on Foreign Affairs 2006).

Rehn further argues that Europe needs to be both economic and political; economic reforms are needed to enhance the competitiveness of the EU, whereas political reforms would make the Union more effective and democratic. Indirectly, economic reforms could improve the general mood of Europe with a strengthened European economy, which in turn would increase the legitimacy of the EU. The great strength of the EU has been its ability to adapt to new circumstances. Although the integration project started in a very different context of post war reconciliation, it has adapted to meet the new challenges of globalisation. Rehn suggests further institutional reforms to make decision making more effective and fair. Enlargement could as such be the

answer to the economic problems; as mutually beneficial industrial restructuring inside an enlarged and competitive Europe, based on cross-national production networks, will create a win-win situation for old and new member states. Rehn notes that enlargement discussions should not be held hostage to a theological debate about the ideal shape of the perfect Union, or the final borders of Europe. One should continue to respect the principle of Article 49 of the EU's Treaties, which states that any European country that respects and applies European values, especially democracy, human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, may apply for EU membership (Rehn 2006).

The EU does not rest on one single principle of legitimacy (Lord & Magnette 2002:26), as argued above. As the entity itself, legitimacy is a compromise built from a series of different foundational visions resting on a plurality of ideas about rightful exercise of political power (*ibid*). The theoretical problem is how a political system built on different legitimacy principles is able to deal with the contradictions between them. It is argued that this conflict need not be negative; deliberation of legitimacy principles nourishes societal education (*ibid*). Additionally, it ensures that the compromise made today does not close the options that future generations will have. Lord and Magnette (2002) understand legitimacy through five dimensions, the first of which is international legitimacy. This is indirect or derivative and depends on the legitimacy of the component states, its respect for their sovereignty and ability to serve their purposes. Secondly, they stress the parliamentary legitimacy; in that the Union requires legitimation by the elected parliamentary bodies, as well as to the member states; dual legitimation. Thirdly, a more technocratic type of legitimacy is suggested, as the EU would best be legitimated by giving its powers to independent actors whose main incentive is to deliver the goals with maximum effectiveness. Fourthly, legal and procedural legitimacy is pointed to; which can be seen as an extension to the international legitimacy; the EU is legitimate because it is properly established in the Treaties. Yet, the EU is not only given legal legitimacy on behalf of the initial contract signed by the member states, or its attentiveness to due process, but also in its capacity to generate a normative order that confers new rights and

entitlements on citizens. Lastly, there is corporate legitimacy, which involves the identification of those affected by its policies and including them in the design (ibid). Each principle implies a distinct account of what is needed to make the EU legitimate on the output and input sides of governance (Scharpf 1999), yet these dimensions are ideal types and the Union mixes and matches them. Enlargement threatens some of these different manifestations of European legitimacy. The procedural legitimacy of the EU conferring new rights to its citizens is controversial in eastern enlargement as the identity both in terms of religion and culture does not meet the concept of how the incumbent citizens viewed the EU.

Beetham & Lord (1998:124) argues that a condition of 'forced reflection' over the possible justifications for political authority is a 'chronic' one in the EU, as the pressing question of its legitimacy is continuously present. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, one argues that the EU as such challenged our learned conceptions of how rightful authority lies within the people constituted as a nation, rather than cross-nationally as is the case with the EU (ibid). Power was known to be exercised through familiar institutions of the nation-state. National governments still retain an important amount of citizens' loyalties. This may be grounded in the historical, linguistic and educational life in the nation states which builds on a stronger national identity compared to the one found at the European level, perhaps especially as the membership of this entity is continually changing (ibid). Therein exists a substantial gap that needs bridging; between the political requirement for a governmental authority beyond the nation state, and the popular support for that authority. A second reason why legitimacy is still debated has to do with its expanding authority and its repeated change, as it takes over tasks that previously were the domains of the member states. The development of the EU, functionally as well as geographically, makes questions of legitimacy necessary; how should its authority be exercised and at what level and how will it govern more effectively? In parallel to this is the frequent questioning of the effectiveness of the different EU institutions, in achieving the goals assigned to them. At decision making level, there is a yearning for rules and policies that are uniform, coherent and practicable, but which at the same time are

considerate to national differences and particularities (ibid). Thirdly, legitimacy remains subject for questioning as there is a widespread perception of a deficiency in its democratic credentials; by whom the decision makers are authorised, in what sense they are representative, and to whom they are accountable (ibid:126).

4.4.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the other important cause for concern in relation to EU expansion, with officials and the public alike worried that an enlarged Union in its functioning will cease to be as effective in producing outputs for European citizens. In relation to absorption capacity, effectiveness is to a substantial degree associated with institutional problems such as disagreements over qualified majority voting versus the use of the consensus principle and problems surrounding the budget.

The problem of absorption capacity relates to the institutional factors outlined above in that it is concerned with the issue of organising consensus building. After enlargement, the fear is that the EU institutions will be incapable of representing all EU members, and that the sheer number of members will endanger the working capacity of all EU agencies and institutions (Vobruba 2003:41). For this, the Parliament suggests, in accordance with the failed constitutional treaty, an extended use of QMV decisions.

Effectiveness in a political system of decision-making is determined by the system's ability to apply measures to meet its preferred goals, and at a minimum expenditure of costs (Førland & Claes 2002:120). This poses demands to all parts of the decision making process, from the initiative to the decision to the implementative phase. For decision making to be effective, it needs be based on relevant information (ibid). The ideal of consensus in decision making ultimately means that each single country's resistance to a particular issue can easily slow down the progress (ibid), and the welcoming of 12 new states through eastern enlargement led to concerns that this would in fact happen more often.

The effectiveness of a political system relates to its capacity of producing tangible results in various policy areas. Public support may derive from a balance between citizens' demands and the system's capacity to satisfy these demands. A political system which does not produce results will lose public support (Karlsson 2001:123). The capacity to solve problems; the effectiveness of a political system is therefore a crucial part of the system's governance (ibid: 162). Scharpf (1996:138), in conceptualising democracy, stresses the out-put related dimension of governance; "where the effectiveness of democratically legitimated policy choices tends towards zero, so too democracy comes to an end". In avoiding the end of democracy, safeguarding effectiveness is paramount (Karlsson 2001:162). As such, the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness is inseparable.

There are a number of institutional implications which enlargement poses, directly linked to the effectiveness of the EU institutions. Firstly, the rising committee size following from enlargement has prompted concerns of loss of effectiveness (Monitoring European Integration 3 1992:95). The membership of the European policy bodies has hitherto been determined by the principle of member state representation. Consequently, any enlargement by n countries implies increasing the number of members in existing policy bodies by at least n . Yet, when Greece, Portugal, and Spain became members, the number of EC Commissioners rose by four, providing Spain with two Commissioners as it was considered a large country, like France, Germany, Italy and the UK. Eastern enlargement further fuelled the fear that the increasing size of the EU would inflate the membership of these bodies beyond a size of effectiveness. There has also been concerns over the current design, and whether it accommodates the capacity needed to cope with the increasing membership base. It has been suggested that the principle of 'denationalizing' from committee membership could be applied to limit the Commission's size to an effective level. This implies that the commissioner is appointed on the basis of her professionalism rather than nationality (ibid: 103). In general, the increase in the number of members of a committee will raise the costs of its organisation and, in particular, the minimum duration of meetings (ibid: 96). Theories of organisation

suggest that the effectiveness of decision-making is reduced by rising committee size when members hold the same rights to propose motions. More importantly, the effectiveness of the committee work, ie the quality of accepted policies, is likely to suffer markedly if committee size extends beyond a certain level (ibid). The larger the group, then the more likely is it that the group cohesiveness suffers, and the less transparent the process of decision making becomes. An increasing size of members will also make face-to-face communication more difficult which further increases the probability that fractions might emerge. In conclusion, the emergence of consensus becomes less likely (ibid). Enlargement may therefore be a case for concern, if it will drive the size of the bodies away from an optimal level (ibid: 97).

Eichengreen & Frieden (1998:297) argue that the effectiveness problem partly stems from the fact that there exists no effective parliamentary control of the Council, which would act as a European government in areas where the EU has exclusive competences. Although the Maastricht Treaty enhanced the power of the European Parliament, this still provides an obvious lack of democratic legitimacy; which will increase accordingly if the tasks of the EU and the number of members are growing at simultaneous rates.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the Union, one should have to move in a greater manner away from the principle of unanimity in decision-making, and to a larger extent make decisions through majority voting. This is reflected in the Commission and the Parliament's suggested measures, and was suggested in the Constitutional Treaty.

4.4.3 Conclusion: legitimacy and effectiveness

The factors assessed here point to the fact that legitimacy and effectiveness are at the core of the sense of enlargement fatigue which pervades the EU, and in turn the introduction of absorption capacity into the EU discourse. As argued in chapter one, a high degree of legitimacy in concert with a high degree of effectiveness is expected to lead to a large degree of absorption capacity within the EU. This conceptual section

suggests that the EU faces major challenges both to its legitimacy and its effectiveness, suggesting that absorption capacity in the Union may currently be at a low ebb. This was especially considered so in terms of legitimacy, as is illustrated in the recent rejection of the European Constitution. After the French and Dutch “no” to the Constitution, the Commission launched a “Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate”, a call for action to reduce the gap between the EU and its citizens. This plan conveys two important aspects; a feeling that the voice of each citizen counts in Europe and a focus on the satisfaction of European citizens with the way democracy works in the EU and in their own country.

The Union clearly realises that effectiveness is of more concern at the present moment than legitimacy. Yet, it has argued that; “for enlargement to be a success, the EU must ensure the support of its citizens (...) Democratic legitimacy thus remains essential for the EU accession process” (European Commission 2006c). The debates over the effectiveness and legitimacy have both heralded concerns. Yet, the Commission particularly points to effectiveness as more crucial at this point in time. This would point towards a higher degree of absorption capacity in terms of the EU’s legitimacy. The hypotheses suggested by this conceptual discussion will be attempted tested empirically in the next chapter, to see whether they are indeed a correct analysis of the contributing factors which are at the core of the emergence of the concept of absorption capacity.

5. Empirical Analysis of Absorption Capacity in the EU

Following from the previous conceptual chapter, I shall in this chapter try to test the present state of absorption capacity in the EU. Is the state of absorption capacity as critical as the discourse surrounding it may have indicated? In my attempt to examine the actual level of absorption capacity, I shall follow the Commission and the Parliament's focus on legitimacy and effectiveness. These shall be examined using Eurobarometer surveys and the Internal Market Scoreboard respectively, in order to assess the legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU after enlargement. It shall be argued that the state of absorption capacity indeed is of a satisfactory level to facilitate further enlargement and belies the sense of enlargement fatigue in the Union. It shall further be argued throughout the analysis that absorption capacity is more of a result of concerns over the legitimacy than effectiveness, at least for the time being. The proposed enlargements to Croatia and Turkey, however, may prove to be a severe challenge to the absorption capacity of the EU, with fears arising that this may lead to the reduced functionality of the Union.

This March, the EU marked the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. Yet, "the successful club celebrates (...) in a sombre mood" (Economist 2007b). A recent poll published in the Financial Times (Parker 2007), conducted in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, revealed that even in these prosperous countries, 44 % of those asked stated that life had "got worse since their country joined the EU"(ibid). This is of course not a reflection of the entire EU's position, yet it may illustrate an overall sense of fatigue within the Union. When asked what one first associated with the EU, 31% answered the Single market, and only 7% answered peace, as many as thought inequality. This reflects, some suggest, the fact that leaders so far have failed to portray an EU with its foundational basis in freedom. In a similar vein, there have been recent widespread claims that the EU is in need of something that excites people more, comparable to that of the peace project of the post world war two era. As Ash (2007b) argues, the EU now needs an inspiring vision of where it is heading to.

A recent Eurobarometer survey (Eurobarometer 2006a) shows that support for membership of the European Union has improved. Overall, 55% of European citizens say that their country's membership in the EU is '*a good thing*' (EU25) (ibid). The Irish and the Dutch are the more positive of the Europeans; 77% and 74% respectively agree with this statement. Spanish citizens are also positive (72%). On the opposite side of the spectrum, Austrians are the most negative; only 34% claim their country's membership is '*a good thing*', with Latvia (37%), Finland (39%) and the UK (42%) following suit (ibid). Still, this indicates a general increase, as in 2004, only 48% of Europeans of the EU15 agreed with this statement (Eurobarometer 2004). This shows a discrepancy of 7 percentage points. Yet, one should note that the numbers from 2004 are of the EU of 15 states, the 2006 ones of the EU25 countries.

The 2006 survey further shows that life satisfaction in European member states remains high, and demonstrates little change over time; 81% of Europeans are satisfied¹³ with the lives they lead. This has overall remained unchanged since 2004 (81% in Eurobarometer 62 in Eurobarometer 2006a). There is a 13 percentage points divergence between the new member states and EU15; 70% of the former say they are satisfied, whereas the figure for the EU15 countries is 83% (ibid). There is further a slight increase in support for the perceived advantages of EU membership (ibid). In 2004 (Eurobarometer 2004), 47% of the respondents said their country benefits from being a member of the EU, a number which increased (+7) to 54% in 2006 (Eurobarometer 2006a). Conversely, the percentages of people who thought that their countries do not benefit from membership were 35% in 2004 and 33% in 2006. The degree of citizens who think their country benefits from EU membership has thus increased at the same time as we see a decline in respondents who believe the opposite.

Still, support for further enlargement of the EU is now less widespread than before (-4 points (2005)); only 45% supports further enlargement (Eurobarometer 2006a).

¹³ The percentages for respondents who have answered "very" (21%) and "fairly" satisfied (60%) are added here.

Additionally, the gap between support and opposition is shrinking, 42% say they are opposed to the prospect of further enlargement of the EU. Yet, the support is stronger than in 2004, as the figure below illustrates.

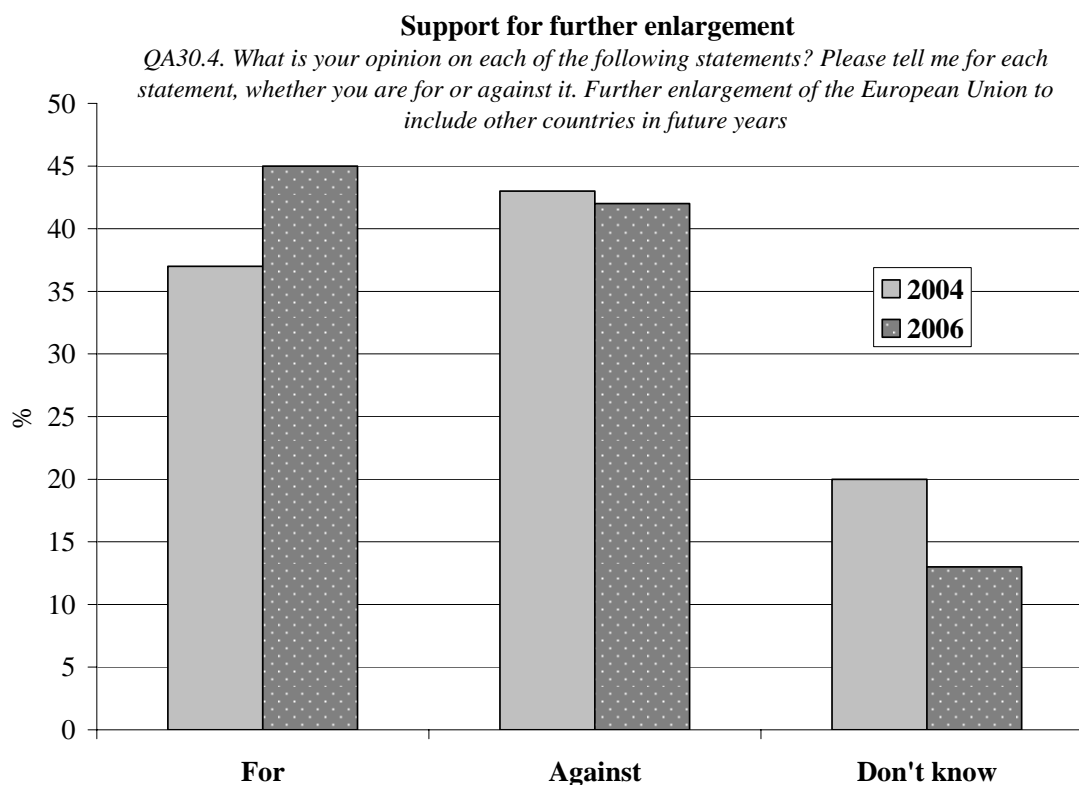


Figure 5.1.

(Sources: Eurobarometer 2004, 2006a)

This figure shows an increase of 8 percentage points of the number of respondents positive to further enlargement, yet only a 1 percentage point decrease in Europeans reported they were opposed to further enlargement. This means that there was also a smaller percentage who responded “don’t know” in 2006; 13% vis-à-vis 20% in 2004 (Eurobarometer 2004, 2006a). It may be worthy to note that the field work for the 2004 survey was conducted between February and March 2004, at a time when the EU was preparing for the Eastern accessions of May the same year, which in turn may have contributed to the numbers somewhat. It is also important to note here that the survey of 2004 was conducted in an EU of 15 members, whereas the one from 2006 introduces the viewpoint of the EU25. Yet, the ten new member states that were included in the 2006 survey were overall more positive towards further enlargement

(66% in favour). This highlights the persistence in the diversity of opinions on the geographical evolution of the EU.

All in all, these four measures together; the support for membership of the EU, the life satisfaction of European citizens, the perceived benefits from EU membership and the slightly increased support for further EU enlargement, despite the concerns regarding proposed Turkish membership, all indicate that the current level of absorption capacity is not as critical as it may have appeared in the conceptual discussion that preceded this empirical analysis.

5.1 Legitimacy – Eurobarometer Surveys

In order to examine the level of legitimacy regards enlargement in Europe, the Eurobarometer surveys 61(2004), 65(2006a) and the Special Eurobarometer survey 255(2006b) will be used. These represent European citizens' views on enlargement prior to the eastern expansion and after, as the Eurobarometer survey 61 was conducted in February to March 2004, and the 65 survey was the most recent Eurobarometer survey available at the start of writing this thesis. The survey of 2004 is used because it reflects the point in time when absorption capacity dramatically entered the EU discourse, and shall be contrasted with where it stands in 2006, enabling one to explore different aspects at the root of enlargement fatigue and the introduction of the concept of absorption capacity.

Regards public opinion, the European citizens' image of the EU has overall improved significantly (Eurobarometer 2006a). One out of two citizens (50%) living in the EU has a positive image of the Union, whereas one in three has an indifferent (33%) perception of it. In 2004, only 44% of Europeans held a positive image of the EU (Eurobarometer 2004). Again, the Irish are today the more positive in their views of the Union (73%), whereas the opinion is very low in Austria (32%) (ibid).

In terms of whether Europeans feel their voice counts in the EU, over half of the respondents (54%) disagree with this, representing a 5 percentage points decline from

the 2005 survey (59%) (ibid). Citizens of the Netherlands and Luxembourg are the more positive of Europeans, at 54% and 53% respectively (ibid). This contrasts with the European average of 36%. Additionally, there is also a slight improvement in the levels of trust in the EU (ibid). Whereas only 41% of the respondents in 2004 agreed that they ‘tend to trust’ the EU, this number increased to 48% in 2006. The intensity of this however, differs strongly between countries; from widespread levels of trust in Hungary (70%), to only 31% in the UK (ibid). The EU25 average of 48%, however, shows that even after enlargement to the east, there is a general increase in the trust of the EU.

The Special Eurobarometer Survey 255 (2006b) presents some socio-demographic variables. Regarding gender specific differences, it seems that men (47%) are slightly more positive to enlargement than women (43%). Age and education also seem to provide significant variations regards enlargement, in that with increasing age, the less positive the respondents are to enlargement. Of respondents in the age cohort of 15-24, 56% say they are positive, compared to only 35% of those of the age of 55 and above. Education is another variable; it seems the better educated the respondent, the more positive she will be to enlargement¹⁴ (ibid). Lastly, political views seem to contribute significantly to one’s view of enlargement, in that people on the left (50%) “tend to endorse the accession of future member states more than people on the right (42%)”¹⁵ (ibid).

In what follows, the political, social, and economic aspects of enlargement will be discussed and how in turn European citizens view these. This is important because these aspects are closely related to the perceived legitimacy of the EU, and in turn how large the degree of absorption capacity is. I shall suggest that the European population is increasingly divided when one goes from political to social to economic

¹⁴ 51% of those who left full time education at 20 or later, as well as those who are still studying (59%), compared to those who left school at 15 (35%).

¹⁵ “In political matters people talk of “the left” and “the right”. How would you place your views on this scale? Left (1) to right (10).”

factors of enlargement. There is little disagreement over the positive effects of the political aspects of enlargement, social aspects are slightly more controversial, yet the disagreements are clearest when dealing with the economic effects of enlargement. Following from this, one can tentatively suggest that the problem of absorption capacity stems mostly from economic factors and fears regarding the economy.

5.1.1 Political, social, and economic concerns

In this section, the Standard Eurobarometer survey 65(2006a) and the Special Eurobarometer survey 255(2006b) will mainly be used in the analysis, given that the purpose is to examine the status of absorption capacity in the EU today. Yet, numbers from Eurobarometer 61(2004) will still be used where this contributes to the argument in order to provide a comparative perspective to the time when absorption capacity emerged.

Political aspects

I start here from the position that the political aspects of enlargement will be important in how the absorption capacity of the EU can be examined. As argued above, European citizens seem overall to be in favour of enlargement. Citizens are positive to the favourable impact of enlargement in political terms, such as the ensuring of peace and stability in Europe, the strengthening of the EU's role on the international scene, as well as enlargement's role in promoting democracy in the European continent (all 67%) (Eurobarometer 2006b).

How then, do European citizens view enlargement? I will tentatively suggest that concerns over the Union's absorption capacity would be reflected in a limited degree of support for enlargement. The recent Special Eurobarometer survey (ibid) states in relation to the general perceptions of EU enlargement that around two-thirds of European citizens agree with the universal ideas that inspire the enlargement of the EU in general (2006b:20). Further, 63% of respondents state that enlargement strengthens the EU. In every single member state, over half of the respondents agree

with this. Overall, the acceding countries of Bulgaria and Romania, together with Croatia and the ten eastern states, show stronger enthusiasm for enlargement than the EU15. Again, the most negative country is Austria (ibid).

Public opinion on how democracy works has reached the most positive level in the last ten years. On average, one in two (50%) (EU15: 48%, New Member States: 59%) of people are satisfied with how democracy works within the Union, whereas just over one third (34%) is unsatisfied. In 2004, only 43% of the respondents claimed they were satisfied with this (40% dissatisfied) (Eurobarometer 2004). Yet, European citizens have overall more trust in EU institutions (48%, EU15: 45%, NMS: 60%) than in their national parliaments (38%) and governments (35%).

The sharp variations in some member states may be understood by the fact that European integration in general is perceived a controversial issue in particular member states. In countries such as Denmark and the UK, there has traditionally been strong resistance towards the EU at the elite level (Karlsson 2001:117), which may help mobilising negative attitudes also at the citizen level.

There are additional political benefits following from enlargement which are of importance to the legitimacy of the EU. Firstly the fact that citizens generally believe that enlargement could lead to a real political unification of the European continent (62%). Secondly, there is also a widespread belief that enlargement increases the protection of human rights and minorities of the EU (Eurobarometer 2006b:36).

Social aspects

In addition to the political aspects, social features are important when dealing with issues of legitimacy. The social aspects divide European citizens more than the political aspects, yet less than economic issues. Overall, these concerns apply equally to citizens of both the old and new member states. The main concerns regarding social aspects are, according to the respondents, the perceived increases in crime, illegal immigration and settlement of workers from other or future member states. Issues of cultural diversity and mobility also divide European citizens.

Regards cultural diversity, seven out of ten (71%) Europeans agree that enlargement enriches the cultural diversity of Europe. Only 48% objected to the disappearance of cultural identities and traditions (ibid:54). The vast majority of respondents (82%) agree that enlargement facilitates the mobility of people like students and businessmen within Europe, and recognise the positive value of this. At the same time, however, 60% believe enlargement increases illegal immigration in Europe. The survey states that several of the EU15 states are more affected by illegal immigration, as people from poorer countries hope to attain a better life in a shorter period of time in these countries (ibid:56). Close to three quarters of the Europeans polled (73%) think that enlargement increases the settlement of workers from future member states in the EU. Yet, a majority believes that enlargement ensures better integration of populations from these countries in the EU (57%) (ibid:58).

Economic aspects

According to the Special Eurobarometer survey on enlargement (2006b), economic factors cause most concern among European citizens. Public opinion is more divided on economic benefits than on both political and social aspects following from enlargement. In fact, EU citizens seem to attach economic disadvantages to this, being under the impression that enlargement has a general negative impact on the EU's as well as the individual member states' economies. Still, not all Europeans conform to this view (ibid).

Europeans are not "totally convinced that a larger EU would have a better chance of meeting the challenges of globalisation", or that enlargement will enhance the EU's capacity to compete with other international players. Many Europeans fear that enlargement subsequently means increased labour transfer to countries where this is cheaper (ibid). The public opinion is further divided over whether enlargement of the EU generates opportunities or barriers for the European economy; 40% are of the opinion that enlargement decreases economic development in the EU as well as in the respondent's home country, whereas 43% disagree with this. Yet, a majority of the European citizens (75%) agree with the labour transfer effect of enlargement, as the

Internal Market does indeed ensure a free movement of goods, services, people and capital; enabling the transfer of jobs from one country to another (ibid:45).

The main concern of European citizens remains the fear of unemployment. In 2004 (Eurobarometer 2004), 44% of respondents answered that the main problem their country was facing was unemployment. Crime was the second largest concern (26%), followed closely by the economic situation (25%), rising prices and inflation (18%) (ibid). Although crime is not directly linked to economic factors, it is kept in this presentation in order to show that the majority of the main fears are of an economic character. In 2006, unemployment was again the most important source for concern amongst Europeans (49%) (Eurobarometer 2006a). Crime was also in 2006 the second largest cause for concern, 24% (-1), and the economic situation again the third most important issue (23%). The concern over inflation was down to 13% in 2006 (ibid).

The fears provoked by the building of Europe include the transfer of jobs to other member countries where the production costs are lower (72%). The second biggest fear provoked by enlargement is that over the respondent's country having to pay "more and more" to the EU (63%) (ibid). Around one-third of the respondents (35%) say they are "not afraid" of the increase in drug trafficking and international organised crime, about half (51%) are not afraid of the loss of power to smaller member states. Another 56% are not afraid of the loss of national identity and culture (ibid).

On a more positive note, two-thirds of Europeans polled (66%) affirm the important role that enlargement plays in supporting the economic development of candidate and potential candidate countries. Still, this support could potentially burden the EU budget, as 57% of the EU25 population consider that the financial support of enlargement decreases budgetary resources for their country (ibid:47). However, the Eurobarometer survey emphasises that the amount spent on enlargement from the EU budget is lower than EU citizens perhaps assume. "The financial contribution by the old member states to enlargement remains limited; only 0.1% of their GDP" (ibid).

5.1.2 Legitimacy in the EU

The Eurobarometer surveys show that whereas support for membership of the EU improves, the support for further enlargement weakens. Support for EU membership is now 55% (+5), and the score for the perceived benefits following from this is at 54% (+2). According to half of the respondents of the survey, the EU's image is positive. These measures all paint a more positive picture of the present state of legitimacy in the EU. It is noteworthy that, with perhaps the exception of Austria and the UK, European citizens are overall expressing positive attitudes to enlargement of the Union. This may imply that the perceived enlargement crisis in fact is exaggerated. In comparison to the survey of 2004, there also seems to be a decline in negativity over the last years. Still, the picture is not a uniform one: the gap between the supporters (45%) and the opponents (42%) of further enlargement is still very small.

The Eurobarometer findings suggest that economic factors would seem to be the main concerns contributing to legitimacy concerns, still the overall legitimacy within the EU seems to be at a satisfactory level. As such, one may suggest that the absorption capacity within the Union, at least in relation to legitimacy, is not as troublesome as indicated previously.

5.2 Effectiveness – Internal Market Scoreboard

I have argued that effectiveness is a central factor in the understanding of the term absorption capacity. In order to examine the present state of effectiveness and absorption capacity within the Union, the Internal Market Scoreboard (European Commission 2006e) and the Commission's General Report of the Activities of the European Union¹⁶ (European Commission 2007a) from 2006 will be used.

¹⁶ The Commission's General Report on the Activities of the Union presents particular measures of the production of the Union, yet as it has not been possible to find comparable numbers from previous years, these have not been used in the

At the most basic level, evaluating effectiveness will involve *comparing* something, preferably against some standard of accomplishment (Underdal 1992:2). I shall look at the numbers of implementation procedures in 2006, with the point of comparison being the years prior to eastern enlargement. The evidence will show how effectiveness measured in this manner appears worse in 2002, when contrasted with 2006. As such this chapter will argue that the EU has not compromised its effectiveness following the expansion to the east.

The General Report of the Activities of the EU (European Commission 2007a) argues that the activity of the EU in 2006 was in many respects formed by the Lisbon agenda of the previous year, which was to “provide the basis for a genuine partnership for growth and employment”(ibid:13). The agenda generated a push factor for progress in several key areas and provided good grounds for growth. One of the main points made concerned better regulation, which is regarded as a joint responsibility involving not only the Commission, but also other European institutions as well as the member states themselves (ibid). As a result of the agreement on the common approach, the European Parliament and the Council initiated impact assessments, welcoming the simplification process. The abolishing of instruments that are no longer part of the active *acquis* has begun, as has the process of codifying Community acts, in order to reduce their volume. The codification programme covers approximately 500 legislative acts, and 85 of these have been finalised by the Commission. 52 of these are already adopted. These 85 replace 300 existing pieces of legislation (ibid:22). Overall, the 500 acts that are covered by the programme shall in turn replace about 2000 instruments in all, which the Commission plans to complete by 2008. These are all measures taken to improve the current effectiveness of the EU.

analysis. Yet, for further reference: the Commission met 43 times in 2006, sent 482 proposals for directives, regulations and decisions, and made 7 recommendations. It also presented 324 communications and reports and 10 Green Papers and two White Papers. The Parliament exercised 158 consultations, 13 approved co-decisions, 90 resolutions and 140 own initiative procedures.

5.2.1 The Internal Market Scoreboard

In the following, the Internal Market Scoreboard shall be used as a measure of the effectiveness of the EU. The scoreboard monitors how quickly each of the member states transposes Internal Market directives into national law and also highlights the number of infringement proceedings initiated by the Commission against each member state. The most recent of the Commission's scoreboards state that the European member states have never performed better in implementing the agreed internal market rules into national law than in 2006.

For the very first time, 2006 saw an average transposition deficit falling below the interim target of 1.5%, a target agreed upon by the Heads of State and Government in 2001. The 2006 figure of 1.2 % is "well below" that level (ibid: 3). The effort is on the whole driven by all member states, even though the newer member states perform better with an average deficit of 0.9%. Every single member state made progress in 2006, and 19 of the EU members are below or have reached the 1.5% target, another two are only one directive short of doing so. Subsequently, only four states are well above the target; in descending order, these are Portugal, Greece, Luxembourg, and Italy.

The number of directives to be transposed in 2006 was lower than in recent years; still it is comparable to that of 2002 and before. Yet, the average transposition deficit today is much lower than it was (ibid). Regards the directives to be transposed in the close future, Luxembourg, Belgium and Cyprus seem to be best prepared as they have already transposed a large number of these.

There have been recent calls from the EU's leaders urging the states to improve their transposition records, and subsequent to this an interim target of 1.5% transposition deficit was set. In December 2006, the average deficit for the year was announced under the heading "best result ever!" (ibid: 5). The average deficit for the EU 25 was 1.2%, the EU15 1.5%. Compared to 1999, the deficit was an average of 6.3%, which fell to 2.0% in 2001, increasing to 2.9% in 2004. As such, the percentage of 2006 is

the best recorded yet. Still, “the ultimate goal obviously remains that all member states transpose Internal Market legislation before the deadlines”, and that there should be no deficit at all. Nevertheless, this shows a remarkable improvement.

Performance wise, 21 member states are below or very close to the 1.5% transposition deficit target. 19 Member states are well below the target, whereas 2 of these member states are very close; Belgium and the Czech Republic respectively (ibid: 6). In these countries’ cases, only one out of 1634 directives needs to be transposed to reach the target. Denmark and Lithuania are the best performers, and are only 5 directives away from a 0% deficit (ibid). There are only four countries that lag relatively far behind the others, the worst of these is Poland, which is closely followed by Greece, Luxembourg, and Italy. The first two of these are the most worrying, as their deficits are the double of the European average (Greece 3.8%, Portugal 3.0%).

The Scoreboard presents an explanation as to why all of the member states have performed better. All states, without exception, have made substantial progress in the last six months. Even if the number of directives to be transposed in the last six months was lower than in previous years, it is now back to the level of 2002 and preceding years. Yet, the average transposition deficit today is much lower than it was in those years. The reduced number of directives to be transposed in 2006 is a factor in to the explanation of the positive progress of the member states. Yet, the primary reason for the substantial overall progress made is the implementation of the best practises set out in the 2004 Commission Recommendation.

The average number of implemented recommendations per member state is up from below 15 to 17 out of a total of 23 recommendations in half a year (ibid:7). Given the excellent performance of the member states, the level of fragmentation has also been reduced to its lowest level ever (ibid: 8). Still, further efforts are needed to further reduce these; as the “failure to transpose a directive that has been transposed in all the other member states holds the Internal Market hostage to one member state’s inability to transpose directives” (ibid).

5.2.2 Effectiveness of the EU

The Internal Market plays a key role in achieving the EU's objective of creating more growth and jobs (European Commission 2007b). Yet, it will only function properly and reach its full potential if the legislation reached at European level is implemented effectively (ibid). The benefits following from being a part of the Internal Market are not delivered automatically. EU rules must be adopted, transposed into national law and enforced. The Scoreboard monitors whether the member states are doing what is needed to ensure that the Internal Market functions properly (ibid:4). If the rules are not applied effectively, their contribution to Europe's growth and competitiveness is undermined. As such, the economic interests of all the member states will deteriorate if some of them do not deliver (ibid).

The effectiveness of the EU, given the Internal Market Scoreboard and the General Report, does not seem to have suffered after enlargement. It would, from what has been argued above, seem hard to see a sense of enlargement fatigue emerging from concerns over effectiveness, suggesting that absorption capacity is more of a matter of legitimacy.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to explore the introduction of the concept of absorption capacity into the discourse surrounding the European Union. A study into the term was called for by the EU given the ambiguity surrounding it and the negative connotations of the term's usage. As such, I have attempted to explore the life, meaning and future of the concept within the European enlargement debate. Enlargement, through the course of this study, has emerged as the most significant factor in interpreting absorption capacity's resurgence in the current EU. I have argued that the problems over enlargement suggest that two main themes are at the core of absorption capacity: legitimacy and effectiveness. I have suggested that despite the tendency from the Commission and the Parliament to focus more on concerns of effectiveness, when empirically measured, concerns over legitimacy appear more important than effectiveness in contributing to the sense of fatigue surrounding the EU, and in turn the emergence of the concept of absorption capacity.

The focus of my argument has been threefold. Firstly, based on the historic discussion, I have argued that absorption capacity has had little prominence as a concept within the EU. This changed with the eastern enlargement of 2004, where increasing public and academic interest pointed towards enlargement fatigue and the subsequent coining of the term absorption capacity and following from this, clarification and definition of the term were sought. Secondly, I have suggested that there now is a consensus on the actual concerns which enlargement brings. These are concerns which the Union cannot afford to ignore, or to reject as nonsense or as only a concept used strategically by those opposed to further enlargement. Thirdly, based on an empirical assessment of the EU's performance in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness, I have suggested that the absorption capacity of the EU is at a satisfactory and functional level. Nevertheless, the prospect of future enlargement still remains a controversial one.

Absorption Capacity does not accurately reflect enlargement fatigue

In accordance with the Commission's report and the resolution made by the Parliament, it has been suggested that the usage of the term absorption capacity may in itself be misleading, provoking negativity and providing justification and support for those opposed to further enlargement. Theoretically, this problem stems from the fact that absorption capacity is borrowed from club theory. Club theory stresses the obstacles any large club meets regards making decisions and conducting common policies. Essentially, when a club increases in size, the hindrances the club faces will increase too, and as such the benefits of club membership will become diluted. It is argued that this theory is ill-fitting in an EU context because in an EU setting, most benefits flow from following common rules, whose value increases as more people subscribe to them. These benefits are "network" benefits that increase with size, and not as absorption capacity suggests benefits that are based on the sharing of something with a fixed supply (Vibert 2006). Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005:13) agree with this and argue that, according to club theory, an organisation will expand its institutions and membership, as for both the member state and the applicant the marginal benefits of enlargement exceed the marginal costs. In a club-theoretical perspective, enlargement will therefore continue until marginal costs equal the marginal benefits.

Nevertheless, it seems problematic to view the EU as a "network" only, and reject the potential "club" properties that it would seem to hold. Contrary to these arguments which dismiss absorption capacity and its basis in club theory as providing a misleading concept, it is important to note, as argued throughout this thesis, that the concerns over enlargement are very real ones, concerns which the EU even seems to have come to a consensus over. As such, there are aspects of the EU that do indeed resemble club properties, suggesting that it would be reductive to look at the EU simply as a network. The EU understood as a network suggests an indefinite membership, whereas the EU understood as a club would suggest that membership will be limited. Following the concerns regarding enlargement stressed in this thesis,

it may be suggested that one cannot view the EU as a “network” only; its membership is not necessarily “open”, as particularly concerns over Turkey show, and as such some club aspects do seem to be evident in the EU. Yet contrary to club theory, the EU has not yet come to a point where it will break down, the EU as a club still seems to function, and the utilities are not diminishing as quickly as the club-sceptics seem to believe. Thus, one should be careful to look upon absorption capacity as a way of stopping enlargement; perhaps the “greatest single achievement of the European Union” (ibid).

Crucially, as argued by both the Commission and the Parliament, is the fact that the sense of enlargement fatigue is not accurately captured by the concept of absorption capacity. In this sense, the Economist coincides with the position recently taken by the European Union, arguing that ‘integrative capacity’ would better reflect the true nature of the debate over European enlargement.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy has been at the forefront of the criticisms of the EU in recent years. The general public may seem disillusioned with the European project (Economist 2007b). Yet, I have argued that European citizens overall seem relatively positive regards the benefits of European membership as well as the general support for membership itself. As argued above, legitimacy is paramount in the effective functioning of the EU, where the citizens may be geographically distanced from the fora of power.

The perception that there exists a legitimacy crisis in the EU is often referred to without much evidence being presented in support of its existence. This, Karlsson argues (2001), may be the case partly because empirical data supporting this notion is hard to produce. But if we do examine the data available we discover that it seems as though the European project does in fact enjoy “fairly broad societal acceptance”. As argued above, it seems that legitimacy concerns pose larger problems than effectiveness regards the absorption capacity of the Union.

As argued in the empirical discussion, the measures of the increasing support for membership of the EU, the fact that the life satisfaction of European citizens remains high, the slight increase in the perceived benefits of the Union and the increased support for further enlargement compared to the figure of 2004, all suggest that the legitimacy of the EU remains adequate.

Effectiveness

In terms of effectiveness, one of the main reasons for the prominence of absorption capacity in EU discussions since the eastward enlargement has been economic factors. Although the state of European economies has improved recently, there are still grounds for concerns; Europe currently experiences slow growth and remarkably high unemployment rates. Yet, the EU alone cannot be held fully responsible for this. Nevertheless, the current economic situation does not contribute to a particularly positive attitude towards the single market, EU institutions, nor the European project in general.

At present, the EU therefore faces two major challenges. Firstly, the Union needs to establish how to reinvigorate the European economy, and secondly it needs to provide measures which will strengthen societal support for enlargement (ibid). The Enlargement Commissioner Rehn has argued that more governmental efforts are needed to convince Europeans about the positive benefits reaped from membership in the club (ibid). As has been argued, the open door policy adopted by three member states of Ireland, Sweden, and the UK at the time of the accession of the ten eastern states provided significant economic gains, not only for the accession countries themselves, but also for the old member states, and particularly for the three countries that held the open door policy. Indeed, this enlargement wave contributed significantly to the strengthening of European economies that is now visible throughout Europe (ibid).

The perceived sense of enlargement fatigue, measured through legitimacy and effectiveness in this thesis, would in turn suggest that there is not a crisis of absorption capacity in the EU.

The future of European enlargement

The objectives of the EU have always been political as well as economic. Article A of the Treaty on European Union (1992), states that

“This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union amongst the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen”.

Herein lays thus the moral obligation and the fundamental objective for enlargement. The will to enlarge has always been prominent, although this task may now seem more challenging than before.

This thesis has shown how a sense of enlargement fatigue has manifested in concerns over the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the EU. These concerns are the main factors, it has been suggested, in the emergence of the concept of absorption capacity. Absorption capacity, I have argued, overstates these concerns, yet still threatens to overshadow future enlargements.

7. Table of Authorities

- Aftenposten (2006a). "Tøffe EU-krav til Bulgaria og Romania". 26 September
- Aftenposten (2006b). 'Inn i EU med et nødkrik'. 27 September
- Andersen, Svein S. (2003). *Case-studier og generalisering*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget
- Ash, Timothy G. (2007a). 'Today's European Union is 27 states in search of a story', *Guardian Unlimited* 4 January
- Ash, Timothy G. (2007b). 'Europe needs a new bold story – and to invent new ways to tell it', *Guardian Unlimited* 22 March
- Ask, Alf Ole (2006). 'Tyrkia forandrer EU', *Aftenposten* 7 December
- Avcı, Gamze (2006). "Turkey's EU Politics. Consolidating Democracy Through Enlargement?", Chapter 4 in Sjørnsen (ed.): *Questioning EU Enlargement. Europe in Search of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge
- Baldwin, Richard E. (2004). "Managing EU Enlargement", Chapter 2 in Helge Berger and Thomas Moutsos (eds.): *Managing European Union Enlargement*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press
- Baun, Michael (2000). *A Wider Europe. The Process and Politics of European Union Enlargement*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc
- BBC News (2002). "Turkey Entry Would Destroy EU". 8 November. [online]-URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2420697.stm> (Read: 10 November 2006)
- BBC News (2006). 'Turkey and Serbia Chivvied by EU'. 16 October. [online]- URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6054576.stm> (Read: 1 November 2006)
- Beetham, David & Christopher Lord (1998). *Legitimacy and the European Union*. London & New York: Longman
- Bilefsky, Dan (2006). 'Barroso says EU must stop expansion'. *International Herald Tribune*, 25 September [online]- URL: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2006/09/25/news/unio.php> (Read: 6 October 2006)
- Blichner, Lars C. and Linda Sangolt (1994). 'The Concept of Subsidiarity and the Debate on European Cooperation: Pitfalls and Possibilities'. *Governance* Volume 7 Issue 3 pages 284-306
- Committee on Foreign Affairs (2006). 'Enlargement must keep its promises but take account of absorption capacity', 27.01.2006
- Dahl, Ottar (2002). *Grunntrekk i historieforskningens metodelære*. 2. Utgave. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

-
- Deubner, Christian (1999). "The Enlargement Transforming Western Europe", Chapter 10 in Victoria Curzon Price et al (eds): *The Enlargement of the European Union. Issues and Strategies*. London and New York: Routledge
- Durand, Guillaume and Antonio Missiroli (2006). "Absorption Capacity: Old Wine in New Bottles?". European Policy Centre. Policy Brief September. [online]-URL: [http://www.euractiv.com/29/images/Absorption%20\(4\)_tcm29-158273.pdf](http://www.euractiv.com/29/images/Absorption%20(4)_tcm29-158273.pdf) (read: 29 October 2006)
- Economist (2005). "Now That We Are All Bundled Inside, Let's Shut The Door". 30 April
- Economist (2006). "The Absorption Puzzle". 29 June
- Economist (2007a). "Constitutional Conundrum". 17 March
- Economist (2007b). "Europe's Mid-Life Crisis". 17 March
- Economist (2007c). "Fit at 50?". 17 March
- Economist (2007d). "Four D's for Europe". 17 March
- Economist (2007e). "The ins and outs". 17 March
- Economist (2007f). "The Quest for Prosperity". 17 March
- Eichengreen, Barry & Jeffry Frieden (eds.) (1998). *Forging an Integrated Europe*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press
- Elvert, Jürgen (2004). "A Fool's Game or a Comedy of Errors? EU Enlargements in Comparative Perspective", Chapter 10 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Enlargement Newsletter (2006). [online]- URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/enlargement/docs/newsletter/latest.weekly.htm> (Read: 26 June 06)
- Esposito, Frédéric (1999). "The IGC: Facing the Enlargement's Agenda", Chapter 8 in Victoria Curzon Price et al (eds): *The Enlargement of the European Union. Issues and Strategies*. London and New York: Routledge
- Eurobarometer (2004). Standard Eurobarometer 61. July 2004
- Eurobarometer (2006a). Standard Eurobarometer 65. July 2006 [online]- URL: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb65/eb65_en.pdf (Read: October 2006)
- Eurobarometer (2006b). "Attitudes towards European Union Enlargement", Special Eurobarometer Survey 255. July 2006

- European Commission (2006a). "Enlargement: EU must keep its promises but take account of absorption capacity" (27/01/2006) Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chair: Elmar Brok. [online]- URL: www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert/infopress_page/027-4658-2606 (read: 13 February 2006)
- European Commission (2006b). 'Basic Arguments for enlargement', [online]- URL: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/arguments> (read: 16 October 2006)
- European Commission (2006c). "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007 Including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members"(8 November 2006) [online]-URL: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2006/Nov/com_649_strategy_paper_en.pdf (Read: 8 November 2006).
- European Commission (2006d). "Two New Members Join the EU Family", Press Release IP/06/1900. 28 December
- European Commission (2006e). Internal Market Scoreboard. December. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities [online]-URL: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/score/docs/score15bis/score15bis_en.pdf (Read: 3 April 2007)
- European Commission (2007a). General Report 2006 on the Activities of the European Union. [online]-URL: <http://europa.eu/generalreport/en/rg2006en.pdf> 26 January. (Read: 5 April 2007)
- European Commission (2007b). "Internal Market Scoreboard: Best result ever". Press Release IP/07/126. 1 February
- European Council (1993). Conclusions of the Presidency, Copenhagen Summit June 21-22 [online]URL:www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72921.pdf (Read: 20 August 2006)
- European Parliament (2006). Resolution on the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States (2006/2226(INI)) 13 December.[online]- URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?Type=TA&Reference=P6-TA-2006-0569&language=EN> (Read: 28 March 2007).
- Føllesdal, Andreas (1998). 'Subsidiarity'. *Journal of Political Philosophy* 6 (1998) 2, pages 204-205
- Førland, Tor Egil & Dag Harald Claes (2002). *Europeisk Integrasjon*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk Forlag
- Gehler, Michael (2004). "A Newcomer Experienced in European Integration. Austria.", Chapter 7 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Guardia, Ricardo Martin de la (2004). "In Search of Lost Europe. Spain", Chapter 5 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge

-
- Gussarsson, Maria (2004). "Combining Dependence with Distance. Sweden", Chapter 9 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Habermas, Jürgen (1976). *Legitimation Crisis*. London: Heinemann
- Hellevik, Ottar (2002). *Forskningsmetode i Sosiologi og Statsvitenskap*. 7.utgave. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
- Hyde-Price, Adrian (1999). "The New Pattern of International Relations in Europe", Chapter 9 in Victoria Curzon Price et al (eds.): *The Enlargement of the European Union. Issues and Strategies*. London and New York: Routledge
- Ifantis, Kostas (2004). "State Interests, External Dependency Trajectories and 'Europe'. Greece", Chapter 4 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- International Herald Tribune (2006). 'Fighting EU 'enlargement fatigue''. 20 June
- Jachtenfuchs, Markus (2005). "Deepening and widening integration theory", Chapter 13 in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (eds.): *The Politics of European Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge
- Kaiser, Wolfram (2004). "What Alternative is Open to Us? Britain", Chapter 1 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Kaiser, Wolfram and Jürgen Elvert (2004). "Introduction", in Kaiser and Elvert (eds): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Karlsson, Christer (2001). *Democracy, Legitimacy and the European Union*. Uppsala (Printed by Elanders Gotab, Stockholm) (Distributor:Uppsala University Library)
- Laursen, Johnny (2004). "A Kingdom Divided. Denmark", Chapter 2 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Lord, Christopher and Paul Maignette (2002). "Notes Toward a General Theory of Legitimacy in the European Union". Working Paper 39/02 ESRC "One Europe or several?" Programme, Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex
- Lundgren, Åsa (2006). "The Case of Turkey. Are Some Candidates More 'European' than Others?", Chapter 7 in Sjørnsen (ed.): *Questioning EU Enlargement. Europe in Search of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge
- Melo, Jaime de, Florence Miguet, and Tobias Müller (2004). "The Political Economy of Migration and EU Enlargement: Lessons from Switzerland", Chapter 6 in Berger, Helge and Thomas Moutos (eds): *Managing European Union Enlargement*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press

- Meyer, Niels I. et.al (2004). *Europa hvorhen? Fire visioner for Europas fremtid*. København: Vindrose
- Monitoring European Integration 3 (1992). *Is Bigger Better? The Economics of EC Enlargement*. London: Centre for Economic Policy Research
- Monitoring European Integration 6 (1995). *Flexible Integration. Towards a More Effective and Democratic Europe*. London: Centre for Economic Policy Research
- Moravcsik, Andrew and Milada Anna Vachudova (2005). "Preferences, power and equilibrium. The causes and consequences of EU enlargement", Chapter 9 in Moravcsik and Sedelmeier (eds.): *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge
- Moxon-Browne, Edward (2004). "From Isolation to Involvement. Ireland", Chapter 3 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Ojanen, Hanna (2004). "If 'in' Europe, Then in its 'Core'? Finland", Chapter 8 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Parker, George (2007). 'Poll finds 44% think life worse in EU', *Financial Times* 19 March
- Penguin Books (2002). 'The Penguin English Dictionary'. England: Clays Ltd
- Pridham, Geoffrey (2006). "European Union Accession Dynamics and Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Future Perspectives", in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp 373-400
- Pinto, António Costa & Nuno Severiano Teixeira (2004). "From Atlantic Past to European Destiny. Portugal", Chapter 6 in Kaiser and Elvert (eds.): *European Union Enlargement. A Comparative History*. London and New York: Routledge
- Rawls, John (1993). *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Rehn, Olli (2004): "Turkey and the EU: a common future?", Group meeting of the Greens/EFA of the European Parliament, Istanbul 20 October 2004 [online]-URL: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/04/466&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (Read: 10 October 2006)
- Rehn, Olli (2005a). "EU enlargement under stress- the policy of consolidation, conditionality and communication". Berlin: Institute for European Policy
- Rehn, Olli (2005b). "Europe at a Crossroads: Enlargement, Constitution and the Future of the EU", Speech to the Transatlantic Institute, Brussels 20 June 2005
- Rehn, Olli (2006). "Enlargement in the evolution of the European Union", Public Lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London 20 January 2006
- Rosamond, Ben (2000). *Theories of European Integration*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan

-
- Scharpf, Fritz (1996). "Democratic Policy in Europe", *European Law Journal* Vol. 2, No.2, pp.136-155.
- Scharpf, Fritz (1999). *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press
- Schimmelfennig, Frank and Ulrich Sedelmeier (2005). "The Politics of EU Enlargement. Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives", Chapter 1 in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (eds): *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge
- Sjursen, Helene (2006a). "Enlargement and the Nature of the EU Polity", Chapter 1 in Sjursen (ed.): *Questioning EU Enlargement. Europe in Search of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge
- Sjursen, Helene (2006b). "The European Union Between Values and Rights", Chapter 11 in Sjursen (ed.): *Questioning EU Enlargement. Europe in Search of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge
- Skålnes, Lars S. (2005). "Geopolitics and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union", Chapter 10 in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (eds.): *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge
- Stirk, Peter M.R.(1996). *A History of European Integration since 1914*. London: Pinter
- Stubb, Alexander C.G (2002). *Negotiating Flexibility in the European Union: Amsterdam, Nice and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave
- Szczerbiak, Aleks and Paul Taggart (2005). "The Politics of European Referendum Outcomes and Turnout: Two Models", in Szczerbiak, Aleks and Paul Taggart (eds): *EU Enlargement and Referendum*. London and New York: Routledge
- Thagaard, Tove (2003). *Systematikk og Innlevelse*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget
- The Sunday Herald (2005). 'Enlargement fatigue hits EU as it talks Turkey', 2 October
- Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community (1957). EEC Treaty. [online]- URL: http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/eec_en.htm (Read: March 2006)
- Treaty on European Union (1992). [online] - URL: http://europa.eu/lex/en/treaties/dat/EU_treaty.html (Read: 1 April 2007)
- Underdal, Arild (1992). 'The Concept of Regime "Effectiveness" '. Working Paper, CICERO. Oslo
- Vibert, Frank (2006). ' "Absorption Capacity": the wrong European debate' , [online] -URL: http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe_constitution/wrong_debate_3666.jsp (Read: 27 June 2006)
- Vobruba, Georg (2003). "The Enlargement Crisis of the European Union: Limits of the Dialectics of the Integration and Expansion", *Journal of European Social Policy* Volume 13(1) 2003 pp 35-49. Ed Ian Gouch. SAGE Publications

Wall, Stephen (2007). 'Vision and leadership are lacking today Europe cannot afford the illusion that it can maintain what it has achieved without treaty changes', *Financial Times* 22 March

Weber, Max (1978). *Economy and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Yin, Robert K. (2003). *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*. Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, London, New Dehli: SAGE Publications